

Citizenship is the
ability of a person



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Citizenship is the ability of a person to be considered a citizen of a given political and social community. Social contract theory states that when a person has a citizenship status, he is given rights and responsibilities.

Active citizenship, therefore, means that all citizens are supposed to strive toward making their community better. This can be done through activities such as active participation in economic activities, volunteer duties, and also engaging in other public duties. A person normally acquires citizenship if he or she satisfies the legal principles in a certain state or country.

A citizen is expected to adhere to the laws that are practiced in his or her country and he should also defend his country against its enemies.

Citizenship generally defines how citizens should relate with their government. The concept of citizenship is treated differently in various nations.

“ In some countries, citizenship can mean a citizen has the right to vote, the right to hold government offices, and the right to receive certain protection from the community, as well as obligation” (Schama, 1990). For instance, “ Australia citizens are allowed to participate in voting, they can contest for public office, and they can also join the military if they are willing” (Akramov, 2009). The fact that a person is residing in a given country does not make him to be considered a citizen of that country. An individual that has migrated to another country is always considered to be an alien. The rights and obligations of aliens are normally defined by the laws of the country where they live. For example, if an individual moves to U. S.

A, he will be expected to behave like other normal U. S citizens. In this case, he will have to pay taxes, also adhere to the laws. Legal aliens may be protected by the law, and they can also acquire property and carry out business activities. However, aliens are not allowed to participate in political processes such as voting. Citizenry refers to all categories of citizens. “ In modern times, citizenship is divided between right of blood and right of soil nations” (Romero, 2005).

Right of blood in this case means that a person is given citizenship on the basis of nation state concept and this is common in Europe. For example, an individual may be considered a citizen due to his ancestral or ethnic background in that country. On the other hand, the right of soil refers to a situation in which an individual acquires citizenship by virtue of having been born in a given territory or nation. Marriage is one of the ways through which an individual can acquire citizenship. Naturalization is also another process that can be used to get citizenship in some nations. “ In recent years, some intergovernmental organizations have extended the concept and terminology associated with citizenship to the international level, where it is applied to the totality of the citizens in their constituent countries” (Akramov, 2009). Citizenship education is today taught in many countries as part of the school syllabus. This is always meant to make citizens know what is expected of them as citizens.

It also enables students to learn more about their rights and obligations. Citizenship curriculum gives students conviction and confidence in order for them to relate with others properly, and bring positive changes in their

communities. Last but more importantly, it teaches students to be responsible both morally and socially.

History of Citizenship

Even though historical development indicates that democracy has developed to be a fundamental spect of modern social organization, the concept of democratic citizenship has always been suppressed, in the process of developing democratic processes.

Citizenship is believed to have started in ancient Greece when a constitutional government was introduced in the city states. The concept of democratic citizenship or classic model of democracy started in Greece. It enabled citizens to participate in governing their states. “ This means that governance was citizenship and citizenship was governance” (Manville, 1990).

Citizenship was also seen as part of achieving maturity. It was only citizens that could be regarded as adult members of society, and people could only become adults through citizenship. Rosenberg contends that Solon is the one who introduced citizenship. Solon stressed on equality of all members of society. He noted that the rich individuals always used their wealth to influence and dominate people. He saw democracy as the only viable means of reversing inequality. Pisistrator is another individual who improved the rights that were accorded to the ordinary man.

Apart from this, he also introduced nobility which was practiced with reference to the law. In the fourth century, Cleisthenes developed classical democracy. He achieved this by raising the number of Athenian tribes from

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four to ten. In this case, each tribe appointed its leader. People were also clustered into units, and this facilitated the formation of new tribes. During the practice of classic democracy, the idea of citizenship was exercised both at family and neighborhood levels. As civic institutions became prominent, citizenship became increasingly necessary.

A citizen had to be an Athenian or if an individual was an Athenian he was regarded as a citizen. The behavior of an individual also became apparent in private and public spheres. Being part of a family determined one's citizenship. Non Athenians could only be citizens if they joined a given family or tribe. Aristotle defined a citizen as a person who participated or contributed to the decisions and development of his city. According to him, a citizen is one who has been born by two citizens. He also stated that a responsible citizen should be in a position to rule others, and he should also be ready to be ruled by other individuals.

He considered this to be a virtue. A citizen should also engage in state politics. Democracy in Greece remained weak and incomplete until 1789. Development of citizenship is normally classified into two phases. The first phase preceded the French Revolution, while the second one emerged after the French Revolution. In the first phase, a person was only a citizen if he participated in politics and development. In Sparta, land was not regarded as a prerequisite for acquiring citizenship. Moreover, only few people could be allowed to vote and occupy public office in Sparta.

Citizenship was also treated as a privilege in both Sparta, and Athens. The only difference was that there was a great struggle against democracy in

Sparta. The Greeks also encouraged self government. Nonetheless, their democracy was not effective and it was partially practiced.

Self government led to coexistence among subcultures. This form of ethnic allegiance is still manifested even today in those countries. In 509 B. C., the people in Rome started constructing a new empire based on laws and citizenship was considered important. The introduction of the new empire brought the monarchy to an end. Despite the making of the Roman Empire a republic, they failed to practice democratic principles. The Roman Empire was based on democratic universal citizenship of free men, and a stoic notion of the universal brother hood of mankind.

“ Greece provided participatory citizen democracy, while Rome provided universal citizenship” (West, 1979). This gave rise to two different concepts about citizenship, which were both adopted in U. S. A. The first set of democracy refers to citizens’ service as well as allegiance to the country.

The second one is about the rights and privileges that citizens are given. In this case, the citizens also have some obligations. For example, they can contribute in government decision making and implementation. In Rome, citizenship was not restricted to the people who were born within its territory. However, this was not the case in Athens where citizenship was only granted to the people who were born there. The Romans allowed foreigners to acquire their citizenship. In Rome, individuals who had active citizenship were supposed to offer a service of twenty days to the government within a year. The development and spread of Christianity in Rome also influenced citizenship.

Christianity changed how the Romans perception of life, hence, it also affected their values. Christianity advocated for a different loyalty. It encouraged people to be loyal to themselves and the church rather than being loyal to the government.

Civic virtue and the value of citizenship waned as the Christian values became more prominent. Nonetheless, citizenship was still able to thrive. “The second concept of citizenship was encouraged by the writings of Montaigne, Bacon, Shakespeare, Hobbes, Locke, and Franklin” (Rousseau, 1968). Citizenship was also able to develop due to economic advancement of the people in Europe. The reformation period also partly contributed to the development of citizenship.

Althusius also reinforced the idea that a person is made a citizen through the service he offers to the society. He also introduced modern federalism. Aliens became protected by the laws of England from the seventeenth century.

They were allowed to acquire land, but the king still had the power to use land. This sparked protests from citizens, but the protests were not very serious. In France, the middle ages also experienced much focus on protection of citizens in exchange for taxes. This system continued even during renaissance. For example, Montesquieu described the obligations of a citizen and he also defined citizenship in terms of liberty and equality. Rousseau also talked about the ideas of Montesquieu and he also came up with his thoughts about the virtuous citizen. Rousseau envisaged a new

society that would have equality, and civism. He also emphasized on the need for education.

He felt that liberty would only thrive if people were educated. Rousseau's emphasis on education also led to the development of republicanism.

Hobbes and Locke analyzed citizenship in terms of civic virtue of the society.

Hobbes stressed on the influence of a person in the society. On the hand, Locke stressed on a person's role acquiring resources and also assisting the government.

Montesquieu believed that a good citizen is one that bides to the rules, is loyal, and also productive. Development of liberalism led to the practice of democracy by the people in America. " Liberal concepts such as individualism, republicanism, liberty, equality, and fairness were embraced" (Hobsbawm, 1996). Dietz highlighted the liberal concepts as follows. Liberal thinking leads to economic advancement. Society should provide an opportunity to people so that they can realize their potential. Individuals are the ones that benefit from formal right and those rights are supposed to be accessed by everyone on an equal basis.

People also have the capacity to think rationally hence they have intrinsic worth. " The shortcomings of liberalism can be identified in the legal concepts of rights, interests, contracts, individualism, and negative liberty" (Anderson, 2006). After French Revolution there was a tremendous growth of democracy and citizenship in Europe. American democracy was developed from the classic ideas of citizenship. Democracy and citizenship have to day become part of Americans' traditions. As western civilization advanced,

democracy, and citizenship were also influenced. The struggle for dominance between the church and the state also jeopardized the development of democracy and citizenship.

The monarchy also tried to sustain its power and this also frustrated citizenship and democracy. As civilization and Christianity gained popularity, the citizenship thoughts and democracy that had been initially suppressed began to thrive. The monarchy was retained in England and it ruled through parliament.

However, the idea of allegiance emerged in America, and it led to the creation of self government and democracy. Democratic government was able to flourish through the citizenship values. Today the pioneer spirit is still continuing, and the Americans still strive for more democratic space as John Dewey envisaged.

United States Citizenship

In America, citizenship started during the period of colonialism. During this time, people came together to find solutions to the common challenges that they faced. Apart from this, they also actively engaged in decision making. For example, they could attend public debates where democratic issues were always discussed.

This kind of relationship was altered by some issues and one of them was the need to grow economically. Therefore, people stopped contributing toward decision making. Citizenship became more articulated in terms of rights and privileges and people no longer saw it in terms of political participation.

Citizenship in U. S enables the citizens to enjoy various opportunities which

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are provided to them through the rights and privileges. For example, they can get federal assistance and they also have access to services offered by the government. "Citizenship in the United States is a status given to individuals that entails specific rights, duties, privileges, and benefits between the United States and the individual" (Huntington, 2004). The constitution has a citizenship clause that defines how a person can acquire citizen.

Therefore, citizenship can be obtained through the following mechanisms. Birth right citizenship is normally offered when a child is born within the territory of U. S. This provision is found in the fourteenth amendment. This amendment states that a person an individual that is born or naturalized within the U. S is considered its citizen and he or she must respect the laws. Children who have not attained the minimum age of eighteen years are normally not allowed to vote because they are minors.

Eighteen years is the age at which children are given the right to have full citizenship. A person's citizenship remains intact until he dies, unless it is revoked by the government through a legal procedure. Citizenship is part of the high school course work, and it is meant prepare students to become responsible citizens. Maternity citizenship has been debated and some people consider it to be a loophole through which some people acquire citizenship. In this case, some people claim that some women normally move to U.

S illegally so that they can have a chance to reproduce and claim citizenship. Illegal immigrants have increased because of maternity citizenship.

Naturalization is the second means of acquiring citizenship. In this case, a person who was born in another territory that is not part of U. S can be granted citizenship through successful application.

An applicant for citizenship is supposed to meet the following conditions. First, he should be law abiding and also morally upright. Secondly, he must have stayed in the country for not less than five years. The applicant should be able to interpret the constitution.

In addition to these, he should know English. They are also supposed to do and pass a compulsory citizenship test. Immigrants who are willing to serve in the military can be allowed to be citizens. Citizens' contribution to civic activities is not obligatory in U. S. For example, there is no need for a person to attend public gatherings. Even being a member of a certain political party is not important.

Some scholars contend that such a trend is likely to affect the future of democracy. Dual citizenship is a situation where a person legally belongs to many nations. American law enables people to acquire multiple citizenships. In this case, if a person is a U. S citizen, he can still go to another country and acquire another citizenship.

A citizen can renounce or restore his or her citizenship depending on an individual's choice. A person who is naturalized in U. S is supposed to renounce the citizenship he had before. " However, this renunciation may not necessarily be considered effective by the country of prior citizenship" (Einstein, 2001). Some people contend that dual citizenship affects patriotic assimilation of Americans and it may also undermine American sovereignty.

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Nonetheless, the effects of dual citizenship are perceived to be less pernicious by others. Dual citizenship also enables the people who have it own property and work.

Honorary citizenship can be granted in exceptional cases to specific individuals who have demonstrated outstanding services to the country. Seven citizenships of this kind have been awarded. For example, Mother Teresa and Sir Winston Churchill are among the few individuals who got honorary citizenship. The relatives of non-citizen soldiers who have died fighting for U. S can be given some assistance. American citizenship is really valued by many people especially the immigrants who really struggle to get. This is because citizens have access to so many privileges and rights that can enable them to live comfortably.

Such rights may not be found in other countries and this indicates the varying nature of citizenship in different territories. Aliens normally do not benefit from some privileges. For example, they usually do not have access to better employment and government services.

Mexican Immigrants

Apart from U.

S citizens, there are many individuals who work and live U. S illegally. Such individuals do not have proper reasons and documentations for being in that country. They are therefore treated as illegal immigrants. " Illegal immigration has numerous and complex causes, but in general, it consists of people from poor countries seeking a better life opportunities in more developed countries" (Romero, 2005). Illegal migrations are not allowed

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because they normally lead to many challenges in the countries where they move to. In U. S illegal immigrants can face many charges including deportation if they are detected by the authorities.

Mexico is the largest source of immigrants in U. S. and one fifth of the total population of legal immigrants living America, are Mexicans. Their large number is attributed to the revision of immigration acts, which have made migration to U.

S quite easy. Most of the illegal immigrants in U. S are also from Mexico. The number of illegal immigrants from Mexico is also growing very fast compared to the ones that are having proper documents. “ Migration from Mexico to the United States has accelerated rapidly to the point where about nine percent of the population born in Mexico is now living in the United States” (Huntington, 2004). This trend is not likely to reduce any soon despite economic decline and the tight security measures that have been adopted to check on illegal migrations. Most of illegal immigrants are always trying to secure better financial opportunities by looking for jobs and good social services in U. S.

This is because many people in Mexico do not have access to formal employment, and decent services. Poverty is also prevalent in Mexico, and this encourages most of them to move out of the country. When some jobs are created in their country, they can never meet the ever growing demand for employment opportunities. The jobs in Mexico are also having low payments with poor incentives. The distance between Mexico and United

States is also short and it contributes to the high rate of immigrants from Mexico.

At present, Mexicans form a substantial population in U. S and they have also developed an influential social group in U. S. “ Mexican American culture will continue to shape U.

S. life in language, politics, food, and daily living and will help define the nation’s identity for a new century” (Huntington, 2004).

Kurds in Syria

Among the minority tribes in Syria, Kurds are the largest and they occupy approximately ten percent of the population in the country.

Majority of Kurds is Sunni Muslims. In addition to this, there are also Yazidi and Yarsan Kurds. A few of them are Christians.

The Kurds have always faced myriad challenges due to the fact that the Syrian government discriminate them. Most of the Kurds originally migrated from Turkey to Syria in the 1920s. Kurds are also found in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. The Syrian government for a very long time has refused to recognize the Kurds as legal citizens of Syria. Syria lacks proper census and this makes it difficult for one to determine the exact number of Kurds in the country.

Kurds mainly stay in the North Eastern part of Syria. In 1962, about twenty percent of Kurds’ citizenships in Syria were renounced by the government.

This move was, however, criticized by many activists who saw it as inhuman treatment. According to the government, the Kurds gradually migrated to Syria and settled in various cities, and they finally formed a substantial

population. It was also noted that many Kurds could use dubious methods to acquire citizenship. Most of the Kurds migrated to Syria with an aim of getting better economic opportunities. This majorly happened after the government carried out agricultural reforms. In this regard, Kurds wanted to buy property and get employment opportunities. For along time, many Kurds living in this country have been unable to access basic social and political rights, and this has barred them from advancing economically, and politically.

Since many of them have not been allowed to become citizens, they have always engaged in demonstrations in order to compel the government to register them. Out of such protests, the government finally agreed to register some of them, but they were registered separately as immigrants. This means they are still treated like second class individuals in Syria. “ With the citizenship, they move from third-class inhabitants to second-class citizens with the rest of the Kurds in Syria who are already citizens” (Davis, 1997). Nonetheless, they can now benefit from the Syrian rights. For example, they can participate in political processes through voting, and they can also own property, and get jobs in the government offices.

The Syrians only recognize the Arabs as the only original citizens. This is meant to foster unity among the Arabs by eliminating other minority tribes. This clause is actually part of their national constitution. This means that Kurds cannot have similar rights with Arabs. It is therefore impossible to change their status. This means that Kurds are not having a chance to be treated as Kurdish citizens in that country.

They should therefore stop identifying themselves as Kurdish citizens.

Despite the few reforms that have been made to make the Kurds have a better life in Syria, they still face some challenges. For example, in Syria no education is offered in Kurdish language.

Secondly, they are not supposed show the Kurdish identity by any means.

There is no public media that uses Kurdish language. Foreigners are also not able to claim land ownership. “ From this we may conclude that part of the rationale for the census was to deprive Kurds in the area from obtaining land” (Davis, 1997). These limitations have led to the undermining of Kurds and they are only left with the option of assimilating themselves into Arab culture.

United Arab Emirates Citizenship

“ The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven semi-autonomous emirates, with an estimated resident population of 4. 5 million, of which only 21 percent are citizens” (Arthur, 1996).

The federation is under the leadership of a supreme council that acts as the executive body. Institutions are not elected through a democratic process. Elections do exist but citizens can inform their leaders about their concerns and opinions.

Citizenship is offered in the United Arab Emirates based on the constitutional guidelines. In UAE, a person is granted a citizenship status by the following processes. First, if a person is born within this territory he can be recognized as a citizen. However, this process may in some cases not lead to automatic

citizenship. Marriage also enables women whose spouses are UAE citizens to acquire citizenship.

In this case, such a woman must live for more than three years within UAE. She is also expected to renounce her former citizenship. Lastly, she should also seek from the authorities. Naturalization is also applicable in UAE, and it granted to immigrants. The conditions for naturalization vary depending on ones nationality. For example, Arab immigrants take a shorter duration to meet the naturalization requirements that other immigrants. There is no opportunity for people to have dual citizenship. An individual can willingly renounce his or her UAE citizen citizenship and the law permits this.

This is called voluntary renunciation. Besides this, an individual's citizenship may sometimes be renounced under the following cases. First, if a person got citizenship through illegal process. Secondly, a naturalized citizen in UAE who violates the law by committing crime can be deported. Joining a foreign army is also not allowed, and can lead to renunciation of an individual's citizenship. Citizens of UAE have rights and obligations which are part of their national constitution. Foreigners who are working within UAE are not allowed to acquire citizenship. Immigration laws in UAE have been reinforced in order to control the problem of human trafficking, and illegal immigrants.

The manner in which democracy is perceived in the United Arab Emirates is quite different from the West. This is because Islamic faith is seen as a guiding principle that shapes other spheres of life. Since they value their religion, naturalized citizens are not expected to criticize it, and they are also expected to be assimilated into the Muslim culture. Non Muslims in UAE

might find it challenging to cope with the culture and laws of this country since they are quite rigid and discriminatory against foreigners.

Bidoun in Kuwait

The Bidouns were stateless individuals who inhabited Kuwait since its independence. This people were initially considered legal citizens of Kuwait by the government.

Their status differentiated them from immigrants and other stateless individuals. Their population was also included in the national statistics. The Bidoun also had identification documents. " With the exception of voting rights they received the benefits of full citizens, including subsidized housing, education, and health services" (Akramov, 2009). However, in 1986, the government came up with restrictions on immigrants and this led to the cancellation of Bidoun rights.

This situation aggravated after the Gulf crisis that took place in 1990. During the Gulf War, the Bidoun who went to Iraq for safety were not allowed back after the war. Most of the Bidoun who served in the government also lost their positions. From 1994, the Bidouns were expected to pay for taxes and other services that were offered to the citizens freely. After some amendments on immigration laws they can now become citizens of Kuwait through the naturalization process.

Conclusion

The idea of citizenship is believed to have started in ancient Greece when a constitutional government was introduced in various Greek city states.

From Greece, citizenship was spread to other territories.

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Many factors also influenced how citizenship and democracy developed. For example, the development and spread of Christianity in Rome influenced citizenship. Development of citizenship is normally classified into two phases.

The first phase preceded the French Revolution, while the second one took place after the revolution. After French Revolution, there was a tremendous growth of democracy and citizenship in Europe. Citizenship is today practiced in many countries and the only difference is how it is exercised. From this discussion the rights and obligations that are offered to citizens is what determines the quality of their citizenship. Citizenship in U. S. A is well defined compared to that of Syria and Kuwait. It is the high dignity given to the Americans that makes people to crave for U.

S citizenship.

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