OSAGIE EFE VICTORIA 200L DENTISTRY 19/MHS01/361 GST203 ASSIGNMENT

REVIEW ON CHAPTER 8: CITEZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

This chapter focuses on what it means to be a citizen of a nation and the conceptual clarifications of that title in a democracy. Sovereignty resides in the people of a democracy, in which they posses the collective right to select their governmental, political, and electoral systems as part of self-determination. Hence, the authority of government derives from the will of the people and their choices to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these are the embodiments in modern constitutions all over the world. There is no democracy without the engagement of the citizens, as engagement is both a right and responsibility to establish, develop and sustain a democracy. However, for a democracy to serve its purpose, citizens have to be aware and informed about issues surrounding their nation and government. Access to information is essential to an informed citizenry which is why transparency is a necessity for democracy. Thus, to be informed, citizens need accurate and timely information held by the government so that they can learn from those who participate in politics how politicians intend to employ the information for the good of the people.

But it must be known that certain barriers prevent citizen participation in every country. These barriers can be based on numerous conditions or factors. For full citizenship to be achieved, these barriers must be broken down whether they are based on gender, religion, race, ethnicity, age or even another status. If not, the credibility of the government is undermined, and universal and equal suffrage is denied. Since citizens interact with the government, there exists a symbiotic relationship between democracy, the citizens and state development.

Pertaining to what a citizen/citizenship is, it is a term which has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain relationship between the citizens and the government. In ancient Rome, to be called a citizen was considerably a privileged status as individuals such a slaves, foreigners and serfs were deprived of citizenship due to racial, political, and religious reasons. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and privileges. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A person becomes a citizen of a state if their parents are born within the territories of that state. And for naturalization, the individual undergoes a process by which they may voluntarily change his or her citizenship of a state to another state.

One of the definitions of citizenship from Chapter 111, section 25: 1(a) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is that, (a) Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either whose parents or any whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria: provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor grandparents was born in Nigeria.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or to be divided into civil, political, and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty such as freedom of speech, justice and so on. Political citizenship is associated with the participation in the democratic exercise of political power. Also, as shown by Glover, who argues that there are 3 dimensions of active citizenship: ethical, integrative, and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. The personal sacrifices that are made aid some public benefit and are hence ultimately also enjoyed by the person who sacrifices. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. In addition, this stance holds that one needs an understanding of the personal interest of members of the wider community as well if they are to truly act as members of the public and hence the democratic activity that is associated with citizenship aids such an understanding well. Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

Talking of Citizens’ rights, they are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. To let the citizen, have a share in the running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. These right are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state.

Now Democracy, which etymologically comes from the Greek word Demos meaning people, and Kratos, meaning rule (rule by the people) is the government of the people, for the people and by the people. The idea that all citizens, high and low, within the state are entitled to take part in the running of the affairs of the state was first advocated in England after the great civil war of the seventeenth century. Democracy has the following features: - the fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed – independent and impartial judiciary – existence of the rulre of the law – freedom of press – periodic election that is free and fair.

In conclusion, democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. Citizens play an important role in democracy as there would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens. It assures fundamental rights for citizens such as the right to vote, right to freedom of speech and many others. Citizens also have the duty in a democracy of ensuring that their rights are preserved by challenging government when it errs.