

OLAOFE OLUWASEMILORE FELICIA

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

Introduction

For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens' views, thus holding those in government accountable. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. Democracy is the involvement or active participations of the people in governance that brings about development.

Conceptual Clarifications

In order to enhance their meanings as used within the context of this paper, it is important to clarify a few concepts.

Citizen/Citizenship

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. There are three dimensions of active citizenship namely: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship.

Citizens' Rights

Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or

prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in its constitution include: the right to life, the right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right of association and right to freedom of speech, writing and publication among others.

Democracy

It has been etymology established that the word democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule, that is ‘rule by the people’. Democracy is a government which is the people when the power employed by the custodians of state business emanates from, and resides in the collective mandate of the people.

Features of Democracy

- I. The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed
- II. Independent and impartial judiciary
- III. Existence of rule of law
- IV. Freedom of press
- V. Periodic election that is free and fair

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

Democratic citizens know that they must bear the burden of responsibility for society if they are to benefit from its protection of their rights. For democracy to succeed, citizens must bear the burden of responsibility for their society.