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Assignment: Do a two page review of Chapter 8, Citizens Role in a Democracy, In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics

Citizens Role in Democracy

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. A citizen is a legal member who possesses a set of rights and duties, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In ancient Rome, it was seen as a privilege to be called citizen because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves, serfs and some alien residents were deprived citizenship for racial, political or religious reasons. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or naturalisation. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state. On the other hand, the process by which an individual voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalisation. Chapter 111, section 25:1(a) (b) and (c) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria defined citizenship. Section 26(1) to section 32 stipulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalise must fulfil before he or she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil, political and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty; Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community (voter) or as an individual elected by the members of a political community (politician); and social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

However, as with so many other concepts, citizenship does not have just one definition, it means different things to different people. Citizenship is about being willing to contribute to social action as well as to political debates, to be willing to get involved (Brannan et. al). According to Glover, he argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship namely; Ethical citizenship, Integrated citizenship and Educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strike towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrated citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions.