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Summary of chapter 8 ( citizens roles in a democracy)

There is no democracy without the engagement of the citizens, i.e. the right and responsibility of citizens in establishing, sustaining and developing democracy. Citizens engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development including provision of opportunity, resources, services and security, for democracy to be deliver, citizens must be informed about issues that can improve their lives, they must be free to come together to express their views and preference and ensure government respond to citizens’ views.

In order for citizens to be informed, they need accurate and timely information and need to learn the ropes of politics and access information essential for citizens benefits. For full citizenship to be achieved barriers to citizens participation need to be eliminated. Citizen implies a relationship between the people and government, citizens have right and responsibility to fulfill so with the government. Citizenship in most country is determine by place of birth, citizenship may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. Turner informed that citizenship is a form of legal identity that an individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, then naturalisation is the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another.

The federal republic of Nigeria define citizenship as every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence or every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria and every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria. Citizenship can be divided into civil, political and social citizenship, civil citizenship is the rights necessary to protect individual liberty i.e. freedom of speech while political citizenship is the participation in democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community i.e. a voter or as an elected individual of a community i.e. a politician and social citizenship is 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.

Brannan argue that citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity but also being active and willing to get involved and contribute towards the well-being of the society. Glover also argued that there are three dimension of active citizenship i.e. ethical, integrative and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good, while integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions and Educative citizenship is the process that develop a moral, practical and intellectual sense of individuals when they practice their citizenship. Active participation aim to expose individuals diverse views and beliefs and deepen their sense of interconnectedness with their fellow community members, Kenny says that in order to ensure full citizenship, people must be empowered to participate in the continual process of shaping their society, community and identities.

Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully, these rights are not absolute since they entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. A right may be a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person group, it becomes a civil rights when it’s expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state. Important civil rights according to Nigerian constitution include right to life, right to work, right to freedom, right to speech and so on.

Etymologically democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos” which means rule by the people, Johnston classified direct democracy as a system that enables people exercise authority themselves. Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people, it’s a government of the people designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state. According to Maxey democracy is the state where arrangements, constitutions and practices of the government such that individuals rights and freedom are ensured and guaranteed, he also state that the state exist to serve individuals and provide conditions which makes life happy and full.

Features of democracy include;. The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed. Independent and impartial judiciary. Existence of the rule of law. Freedom of press. Periodic election that is free and fair.

Responsibilities of citizens in a democracy is that;. Citizens have the duty to vote. Citizens should be willing to pay taxes to be able to fund a democratic government, then there would be no democracy. A good citizen must have duty to obey law, democracy cannot exist in a lawless society and citizens must be willing to obey. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. A good citizen must support public education through payment of taxes, local volunteer efforts and so on.