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A TWO-PAGE REVIEW ON CHAPTER 8: CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY.

In a democracy, sovereignty lies in the masses. This means that there is no democracy without the participation of the citizens.

Democracy has been defined as ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’. In other words, 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 work to see that government responds to citizens’ views, thus holding those in government accountable. In democracy, the involvement or active participation of the people in governance that brings about development.

DEFINITION OF SOME CONCEPTS.

- A. Citizen/Citizenship: Citizen has an inherently political meaning which implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government of a particular country. Citizens have numerous rights and responsibilities which will be discussed later.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or naturalization. A person can become a citizen by birth if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the confines of that state. On the other hand, the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalization.

Citizenship can be divided into: civil citizenship, which refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty e.g freedom of speech; political citizenship, which is associated with participation in the democratic process either as a voter or a politician; and social citizenship, which 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.

There are several definitions of citizenship by different scholars but all of them point at one thing which is citizenship is a privilege status conferred by states on its people either by birth or by naturalization.

- B. Citizens' Rights: A right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Individual's rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Therefore, for a citizen to have a share in the running of the government, a group of rights is very important. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of a constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right. A citizen can seek redress in the court of law if his rights are being infringed upon by another citizen or the government. Some of the civil rights of a Nigerian citizen are: right to life, right to work, right to freedom of speech, right to freedom of religion, right to education etc.
- C. Democracy: The word 'democracy' is derived from a Greek word 'demos' meaning people and 'kratos' meaning rule, that is 'rule by the people'. The Greek democracy was a limited institution in that it excluded laborers, slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. The idea that all citizens without exception are entitled to take part in the running of the affairs of their state was first advocated in England after the great Civil War of the seventeenth century. According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government of the people when it is designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state and that it is a government by the people when its ideological undercurrents is grounded in the people's culture, also it is a government for the people when the power employed by the custodians of the state emanates from and resides in the collective mandate of the people. The features of democracy are: the fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of rule of law, freedom of press etc.

For a perfect democracy, citizens have some responsibilities and duties which they must carry out. They include:

- 1) Citizens have a duty to vote in who they want and vote out who they do not want as this is the major point in democracy.
- 2) Citizens must be willing to support public education in every possible way through local volunteer efforts. Education is power in a democracy because it strengthens citizens to be better informed.
- 3) A good citizen must be ready to obey rules and regulations guiding the state and assist officers by reporting those who breach the law as democracy cannot exist in a lawless society.
- 4) A good citizen must pay taxes as this is what a good democracy will use to provide for its citizens.

In conclusion, the commitment and cooperation of citizens is important for the survival of a democracy.