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19/MHS01/398

MBBS

GST 203

ASSIGNMENT

Do a two page review of Chapter 8, Citizens role in a democracy, In Salient issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self determination. These percepts are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitutions the world over. They capture the foundation for the famous formulation that democratic government is ‘’of the people and the people for the people’’.

For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. To be informed, citizens need accurate and timely information, particularly government-held information. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. If not, universal and equal suffrage is essentially derived and governmental credibility is undermined.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Citizen/Citizenship: Citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Conditions under which naturalization are conferred vary from country to country.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. However, as with so many other concepts, citizenship does not just one definition, it means different things to different people. Citizenship is about being willing to contribute to social action as well as political debate, to be willing to get involved. However, there are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover(2004:18), who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: Ethical citizenship, Integrative citizenship and educative citizenship.

Kenny, a community development practitioner, argues that contemporary constructions of citizenship can be understood by differentiating passive from active citizenship.

Citizens’ Rights

Individual’s rights and liberties are the ground work of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order to let the citizens have a share in the running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Some rights in Nigeria include; Right to life, right to education, right to work e.t.c

Democracy

It has been derived from the Greek word ‘’demos’’ meaning people and ‘’kratus’’ meaning rule that is ‘ rule by the people which has been etymologically established. The Greek democracy was a limited institution in that it excluded labourers, slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. The idea that all citizens, high or low, within the state 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 seventeen century.

Abraham Lincoln, former American president, perceived democracy of the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY

Democratic citizens recognize that they don’t only have rights, they have responsibilities. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active, not passive, because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility and no one else’s. Therefore the citizens are expected to perform the following:

A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism.

A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote

A good citizen should be willing to pay taxes.

A good citizen must have a duty to obey law.

He/She must support public education in every possible way.

CONCLUSION

Citizens play an important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the cooperation and commitment of citizens. A positive attitude should be maintained with development of the state being the priority.