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**QUESTION**

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 a democracy

Sovereignty resides in the people in a democracy and collectively they possess the right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems. Here the authority of the government is derived from the will of the people and these precepts are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitutions all around the world. The government and elections belong to the people and there is no government without the people. For a government to be effective and for democracy to deliver the citizens have to be enlightened and informed on the intricacies of government to be able to fully understand and participate to hold the government accountable. Transparency is important in a democracy so citizens can fully observe to make enlightened decisions. Freedom of speech is also of importance to enable citizens share their views on a government. This ideal is most times not met as various barriers to citizen participation exist from the subtle to the obvious and for citizens to effectively combat these barriers they need to be properly educated of these things.

*Citizen/ citizenship.*

This has come to mean a certain type of relationship between a people and their government. A citizen possess certain rights as well as responsibilities including the right to participate in activities involving public welfare. Nowadays citizenship is usually conferred on all occupants of a state and usually given at birth or through the process of naturalisation. Citizenship can be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Citizenship has no single definition as it means a different thing for a different person. People like Brennan believe that citizenship has to be active and an active citizen is someone who volunteers in public service provision. Glover showed also that there are broader definitions to active citizenship as it has three dimensions; ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. *The ethical citizenship* understands an active participation in a public stride towards the public good. This aspect brings to light that an individual sacrifice towards public good will be of advantage to not just the society but the individual as well. *Integrative* citizenship involves a range of participation in public affairs that goes beyond political practices and institution. This idea believes that an individual has various roles to perform in society to enable them appreciate the community as a whole. *Educative citizenship* according to Dagger (1997), “refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.” Active citizenship on its part exists to foster interconnectedness and give and individual a sense of value on being part of a larger community also to expose the connection between an individual’s private interest and the general interest of the community. Passive citizenship is different from active citizenship as passive citizenship refers to the rights and responsibilities given to a citizen by the state while active citizenship as argued by Kenny is necessary to ensure full citizenship as people must be empowered to participate in the continual process of shaping their society, their community and their government. In conclusion is was mentioned that “citizenship is a privilege status conferred by a state on its people either by birth or by naturalisation.”

*Citizen’s rights.*

Individual rights form the groundwork of a state as it enables it’s members to live and development fully. Rights are not absolute as they are limited by others around you and they are defined as a privilege or a prerogative conferred by law on an individual or group. A civil right is one that is expressed in the constitution of a state and of any of these rights of a citizen are trampled redress can be sought in a court of law.

*Democracy.*

Usually defined as rule of the people. Direct democracy existed in ancient Greece as everyone ruled and represented themselves and Abraham Lincoln popularly defined democracy as “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” The idea of a leadership permitted by the people was introduced in great Britain after their civil war and from there spread throughout the world in the 19th and 20th century that no one should be rule over people without their permission expressly given. As there is no single definition of democracy it had been brought forward that certain characteristics remain constant in the various definitions

1. The fundamental human rights of citizens is guaranteed
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of rule of law
4. Freedom of the press
5. Periodic elections that is free and fair

*Duties and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy.*

For a government of the people to work the people have to be actively involved in its activities. Citizens should realise that as they possess certain rights by virtue of the state they also have responsibilities to the state as well and a government of the people needs constant vigilance and support by the people.

1. A citizen in a democracy has the duty to vote as leaders and policies should be chosen by the majority.
2. A citizen should pay taxes as this is the funding for the democracy and it’s the means to support it.
3. A good citizen should have a duty to obey the law as these laws guide the well being and orderliness of individual and society.
4. A good citizen has a dirt to refrain from offering destructive criticism and if sensing a wrong should offer criticism to build up and better alternatives.
5. A good citizen should refrain from interference with the rights of other members of society as everyone is important equally.
6. A good citizen possess the duty to support public education as much as possible.

In conclusion we see that democracy is a system of government where the citizens are directly involved in every aspect of the government by their votes. It is considered the best form of government in the modern era and it is clear that the citizens play a big role in an effective democracy. Democracy exists by the citizens to serve the citizens and they have to play their part actively to ensure it. Transparency and accountability are very important to monitor that the processes go smoothly. Citizens also have a duty to monitor the activities of government institutions and to participate where necessary to lend a hand and should push in every way to foster public education to dispel apathy and ignorance which are two major blows to democracy. Working hard and remaining critical citizens must loose sight of public interest and should strive to keep a good attitude and realize that every single member is important in a society to make the dream of a perfect democracy come alive.