

## ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

<sup>1</sup>Sulaimon Adigun MUSE (Ph.D) & <sup>2</sup>Akintomiwa Olaniyi OBAFEMI

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science Education, Lagos State University of Education, Oto-Ijanikin.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science and International Relations, Augustine University, Ilara, Epe.

### ABSTRACT

*Election management and administration in Nigeria has always generated a lot of challenges and will always generate these challenges due to the sensitive and precarious nature of elections in the country, and the “do or die” attitude of the political actors, who are bent on winning elections at any cost. This becomes more important as Nigeria prepares for another round of general elections in 2023. It becomes more strategic because, election is the most peaceful process of change of government or regime the world over. This process becomes even more tense with the involvement of the political actors in the process of these elections. Thus, making the management of election a very difficult task for the election manager, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The aim of this paper is to examine the challenges of election management in Nigeria, with a view of proffering solutions to these challenges. The study is basically descriptive in nature and will make use of secondary data. The key recommendations of the study are that adequate security must be provided by the Federal, State and Local governments for the election managers, the electorate and the election materials. Also, the election manager, INEC must engage the services of professional body such as the National Political Science Association (NPSA) in handling elections in Nigeria in order to have a free, fair, credible and transparent elections in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Election, Management, permanent voters' card, National Political Science Association (NPSA), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

### INTRODUCTION

Elections in Nigeria has always been fraught with disagreement, dislocation, chaos and political violence (Muheeb, 2015). This situation led to the formation of Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) now defunct, shortly after independence in 1960 to supervise and manage the electoral process. FEDECO was roundly criticized for being partisan in the electoral process, particularly by the progressive party, who sees FEDECO as an extension of the Conservative party, particularly after losing the Presidential elections in 1979 and the 1983 elections (Oromareghake, 2013).

Consequently, the collapse and demise of FEDECO led to the formation and the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1999 to usher in the third republic. (Momah, 2016). To many scholars and political observers in Nigeria, INEC has made many attempts to improve the election process in the country, by introducing innovative and technological devices such as bringing in independent and even foreign election observers, permanent voters' cards, card readers machine, electronic transfer and counting of votes. All these innovative technological ideas were aimed at arriving at free, fair, credible and transparent elections (Umar, H. S. I., Atte, J., & Haruna, S. 2022).

However, just as some scholars and political observers have lauded the efforts of INEC so far, some are also of the opinion that INEC is still lacking in some vital areas, hence if INEC must play the constitutional role given to it as the election manager in the country, these grey areas must be amended (Umar, H. S. I., Atte, J., & Haruna, S. 2022). Furthermore, this become pertinent more so because of the sensitive and precarious nature of elections in the country, and the “do or die” attitude of the political actors, who are hell bent on winning elections at any cost and the fact that the general elections in 2027 is just around the corner. The aim of this paper is to examine the challenges of election management in Nigeria, with a view of proffering solutions to these challenges.

### CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

#### ***Election***

Elections is central to the principle of representative democracy all over the world. Since the birth of modern states and the major advancement made in terms of the popular will as one of the sources of sovereignty, election has offered a way through which the people exercise their right to determine who rule or conduct the affairs of the state. Closely related to this fact is that election confers legitimacy on those elected, because such type of political

recruitment reflects the wishes and aspirations of the people. Apart from enabling the people to make their choice which is an essential ingredient of democratic election promotes probity and accountability, in the sense that the fear of defeat at the next poll exerts pressure on those in power to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and to take account to popular interests and wishes in their decisions (Muse, 2021).

A free and fair election is one in which the political system and processes guarantee that each voter will be allowed to vote only according to his conscience, but in a conducive environment devoid of threat, fear and violence, corrupt practices, impersonation and intimidation in any form or kind (Muse & Narsiah, 2014). In other word, free and fair election is one in which electoral laws are strictly adhered to by all stakeholders. According to Heywood (2002), election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people, the electorate.

Eyiere (2003) agreed with Heywood that election is the process through which candidates are elected to fill political posts. It is the process and procedures by which candidates are elected into public office or legislature/parliament. Election could also mean the procedure of aggregating pretenses of particular kind. The bottom line of election is that it offers choice to the electorate who can choose between two or several alternatives. In a nutshell, election is the chain of actions, plans and regulations that culminates in the filling of vacant posts and offices by the candidates.

### **Management**

According to Mary Parker Follet, in Graham (2003), management simply put in concise and precise is the “the art of getting things done through people”. It's a means of achieving a goal or an objective with the use of team work. Hence, management emphasizes unity, togetherness and collective efforts in order to achieve specific aims and objectives.

Nonetheless, the seven fundamental functions of management have been well encapsulated in the acronym 'POSDCORB'. These are: Planning, Organizing, Supervising, Directing, Co-ordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. Kwok (2014) identified some basic fundamental theories of management. These are:

- i. Scientific management theory by Frederick Taylor
- I. Principles of administrative management theory of Henry Fayol
- i. Bureaucratic management theory by Max Weber
- i. Human relations theory- Elton Mayo
- i. System management theory of Chester Barnard
- i. Contingency management theory- Fred Fiedler Theory X and Y-Douglas McGregor

### **CHALLENGES OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

Several factors affect the effective management of elections in Nigeria. These include the following:

**Insecurity:** The most portent threat to the forth coming general elections of 2027 is the problem of general insecurity in the country. REF This is as the country continue to battle with insurgency banditry, kidnapping for ransom, burning of INEC offices, particularly in the Eastern part of the country that is agitating for the self-rule of Biafra (The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), 2022).

**Abusive and Unhealthy campaign practices:** Most of the political parties in Nigeria, that should be selling their political philosophy, ideas and manifestoes to the electorate in most cases only indulge themselves in raining abuses and unhealthy comments on opposing political parties (Umar, H. S. I., Atte, J., & Haruna, S.2022). This situation does not augur well for us as a people and for our democratic system. Most of their campaign are devoid of any form of enlightenment to the electorate, devoid of any objectivity and laden with lies, blackmails and character assassination (Vanguard, 2022).

**Buying of Permanent Voters' Card (PVC):** With the introduction of the electronic machine, rigging of elections, snatching of ballot boxes no longer have significant effects on the outcome of elections again. Hence, the political actors have resorted to buying of PVC from the electorate, the aim of doing this is to garner as many PVC as possible which can be used to vote in favour of their prefer candidates on the day of the election. This is another challenge that the election umpire has to eradicate with the collaboration of the various security agents. Failure to nip this in the bud could spell a doom for free, fair, credible and transparent elections in the country (Punch, 2022).

**Difficult terrain:** According to Iwuoha (2018), there are many bad and non-motorable roads spreads across the length and breadth of the country. This bad road network serves as hindrance against the INEC officials in accessing many communities, particularly the rural communities during elections. In a bid to access these constituencies election officials have had to use other methods such as the water transportation to access these communities. It is on record that many INEC officials, and other professionals have lost their dear lives to road accidents, boat mishaps and so on in the process of ensuring a free and fair and orderly election.

**Poor internet connectivity:** Another threat to the operation of election in Nigeria and by extension the forthcoming 2027 elections is the very poor and unpredictable internet connectivity in the country. This becomes very important because the internet would be deployed and put to maximum use to transmit election results to the public and the international partners involved in the election process. Hence, the failure of the internet basically on the election day may lead to rumor, and fake results being peddled by the overzealous political actors, this situation if not well managed can lead to electoral violence loss of lives and properties (Muse & Salau, 2021).

**Late arrival of election officials and election materials:** Muse & Narsiah (2014), established that, this is another major logistical problem that has been bedeviling the electoral process in the country. Often times the election officials and the election materials always arrive late to their various polling booths and election centres. This is partly due to improper planning and inadequate knowledge of the communities where the elections are to take place. Some voters have been frustrated and disenfranchised after waiting for several hours without the arrival of the election officials, this is obviously against the spirit of democracy and fairness in election.

**Inducement of election managers by the politicians:** According to Ayeni (2019), in a bid to appeal to the emotion of the election manager and buy them over, overzealous politicians are in the habit of inducing the electoral officials with financial and material inducement. Millions of naira are voted for and set aside for the election umpire believing that with the inducement such official is expected to cooperate with the political party and party agents in carrying out electoral malpractice to favour the preferred political party.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A credible, free, fair, reliable, and transparent election can only take place if and when some of the challenges identified by this paper are tackled head long such as insecurity, abusive and unhealthy campaign practices, buying of Permanent Voters' Card (PVC), difficult terrain, poor internet connectivity, late arrival of election officials and election materials, inducement of election managers by the politicians. It is the view of this paper that election is strategic and is the most peaceful process of change of government or regime the world over. This process becomes even more tense with the involvement of the political actors in the process of these elections.

Based on the foregoing identified challenges facing the management of election in the country, the following solutions are suggested to bring about succor in the polity.

**Professional associations:** Professional associations such as the Nigeria Institute of Management (NIM), Nigeria Institute of Chartered Accountant (ICAN), National Political Science Association (NPSA) and so on should be involved in the management of the election as consultants to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Professional body such as the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) can also be drafted in to carry out a comprehensive medical examination on would be aspirants to ascertain their level of physical and mental stability.

**Adequate security:** Security is key in all human endeavour, vis-a-vis socio-political and the economic sphere. It more important in the management of the electoral process before, during and after the election exercise. Therefore, maximum security should be provided for the election managers, the election materials and the voters. Many qualified aspirants and even credible voters have been scared away from taking part in the election due to lack of adequate security to protect their lives and properties from hoodlums who are hell bent on truncating the electoral process in favour of their preferred candidates. They often come to the election centre with various arms and ammunition, guns, cutlass, machetes to threaten electorates that are not in support of their preferred candidates.

**Alternative sources of power:** There should be adequate provision of back up of alternative sources of power supply such as solar, generating sets, and so on, be made available to the election managers. Likewise, continuous and adequate training should be given to the technical personnel to handle cases of malfunctioning card reader machines. This will not only ensure that the elections are credible, free, fair, reliable, and transparent, but will also go a long way to sustain and stabilize our democracy in Nigeria.

**Spending monitoring:** In entrenching fair play, justice and providing level playing ground among the political actors, the election manager must put an agreed seal on the spending of the political actors. This will not only provide a level playing ground for the elections, but will also reduce to the barest maximum the incidence of electoral corruption, overzealous spending and the unnecessary inducement of the election umpire, voters and political thugs.

**Transportation:** Other means of transportation such as use of airplanes and helicopters should be exploited and deplored by the election managers. The situation where the larger percentage of election materials and election managers are transported via the road is not in support of free and fair election. The failure of INEC officials to arrive at the appropriate time for the election has often led to many voters being disenfranchised, having waited in the sun and rain for many hours without the arrival of the election officials. Those that have been disenfranchised could also be the determinant faction or factors to determine the outcome of such election.

## REFERENCES

- Ayeni, O. O. (2019). Commodification of Politics: Party Funding and Electoral Contest in Nigeria. *SAGE Open*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019855855>.
- Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) (2022). Insecurity, Money Politics, Others May Mar 2023 Polls. <https://leadership.ng › insecurity-money-politics-others-...>
- Eyiere, D. O. (2003). *Government Made Easy*, Benin City Nigeria. Quality Publishers Limited.
- Graham, P. (Ed.). (2003). *Mary Parker Follett prophet of management*. Beard Books.
- Heywood, A. (2002). *Politics*. Petgrave Publisher. London.
- Iwuoha, V. C. (2018). ICT and elections in Nigeria: Rural dynamics of biometric voting technology adoption. *Africa Spectrum*, 53(3), 89-113.
- Kwok, A. C. (2014). The evolution of management theories: A literature review. *NangYan Business Journal*, 3(1), 28-40.
- Momah, P. O. (2016). Electoral commissions and the conduct of elections in Nigeria: The role of INEC. *Elections and Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*, 37.
- Muheeb, I. O. (2015). Voting and Violence in Nigeria's 2015 Elections. In *a Two-Day National Conference on the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria organised by the Electoral Institute, Independent National Electoral Commission* (pp. 27-28)
- Muse, S.A. (2021). Consolidating Participatory Democracy in Africa: The Nigeria Experience. Eliva Press, Republic of Moldova, Europe. Available at:[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
- Muse, S.A.& Narsiah, S. (2014). Public Participation: Problems and Prospects of Elections in Nigeria. *Pro Journals of Humanities and Social Sciences (PHSS)*, 2 (1): 46-Available at:[www.projournals.org](http://www.projournals.org).
- Muse, S.A, & Salau, J.O. (2021). The problems of electronic voting in Nigeria: An assessment of the 2015 general election. *MOCPED National Journal of Politics(MNJoP)*, 1 (1), 1-17.
- Oromareghake, P. B. (2013). Electoral institutions/processes and democratic transition in Nigeria under the fourth republic. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1), 19-34
- Punch. (2022). Politicians buying PVCs from voters, INEC alleges. <https://punchng.com ›politicians-buying-pvcs-from-vo...>13 Dec.
- Vanguards'. (2022). Abusive campaigns: APC, PDP, LP trade blames.<https://www.vanguardngr.com › News>. 2 Dec.

