

# Perception of E-Voting- Panacea to Solving Electoral Logistics Challenges in Nigeria

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## INTRODUCTION

The logistics planning and control is very crucial for electoral system of any country. Failure arising from uncoordinated or planned electoral logistics system can result into loss of finance and lack of credible election. The Nigeria's electoral system has been said to have entered into fourth republic from independence of the country. Before independence, Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established to conduct 1959 election and between 1960 and 1965; Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) was established to conduct elections in Nigeria post-Independence. The military coup of 1966 led to the dissolution of (FEC). The second Republic was the transition from military to civilian president of between 1979-1983. The subsequent coup d'état of 1983 led to the emergence of installation of Major General Muhammad Buhari (rtd) as the Head of States. The constitution of Third Republic was drafted in 1989 and General Ibrahim Babangida extended his rule till 1992 and promised to hand over power to democratically elected president. The major two parties were Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) party. The then military regime instituted the secretariats for these political parties across all the local governments. The Babangida led administration set up a transition team headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan and the chairman of Interim Government which was too difficult for Shonekan to handle. Shonekan was removed from office by the minister of Defence late General Sanni Abacha on November 17, 1993 (Wikipedia, 2019). It was generally believed that, the postponed June 12 presidential election was won by SDP presidential candidate; Moshood Kasimawo Abiola known as MKO. The incarceration was facilitated by General Sanni Abacha for charges of treason (Ojo, 1998). The death of Abacha in 1998 paved way for General Abdusalam Abubakar and he was the one who declared the release of General Obasanjo from prison. Obasanjo contested under people's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1999 and won the election. The fourth republic started with 1999 constitution and till date, the constitution is only being amended.

The processes involved in selecting a democratic leadership are very complex and financial demanding. From the party selection to winning the election is like a battle not only in Nigeria but, anywhere democracy is being practiced. Unfortunately no better procedure or process that can be adopted for better governance, except through election. According to UNDP (2007) elections are means through which people voice their preferences and choose their representatives. Election is a very complex operation. Whether manual or automated, it requires people performing important tasks, from handling sensitive materials to serving voters and providing crucial support.

The cost of conducting elections and bye election in Nigeria especially for the logistics of materials –in form of manpower, importation of card readers, generation of ballot papers and boxes, the security, communication and information are issues of serious concern. With four years ahead four successive plans of elections in Nigeria, one will expect that the election processes should achieve near-targeted level of achievement. Very regrettably however, Nigerians do not seem to believe or have confidence in electoral process as many Nigerians do not vote during elections. Against this backdrop, this qualitative research has been carried out to identify electioneering challenges and suggest the possible solutions to the problems of electoral logistics in Nigeria.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

ACE mobile (2019) described the electoral logistics has the planning and placement of materials and people like the staff, the security agents, party and candidate agents, voting equipment, and observers for elections and return the collected data till the success of a credible result is announced. The emphasis was laid on ensuring that, electoral logistics should be mindful of wastage of resources and materials before, during and after elections. This however, tend to be a herculean task especially in a situation where the security of lives and properties are threatened by desperate politicians. The divisions of Nigeria's political offices are: The office of the president and

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vice president, the office of the governor of states and their deputies; the offices of Local Government Chairmen and their vice. All these constitute the executives. The political office for legislators are: The National Assembly comprises (Upper Chamber) and (Lower Chamber). Each State of the 36 states in Nigeria is divided into three senatorial districts and there by producing three senators. The Federal Capital Territory is to be represented by one senator. The total number of senators equal to 109 at the National Assembly. The House Representative has 360 seats for all the constituencies in Nigeria (RFI, 2019). According to Dundas (2011), many flawed elections in AU (African Union) Member States during the first decade of the 21st Century could be traced back to inadequate or more perhaps more accurately the absence of proper management of election logistics. The required inventory of data and data control management are critical to the success of any election as forecast of data used in planning must match that of implementation. For balloting and even e-voting, the ability to get the materials and all equipment needed for election at the right place at the right time and in good condition with well trained staff are essential parts of electoral logistics. The preparation for electoral logistics can be segmented into three: pre-election logistics, election logistics and post-election logistics. Pre-election logistics requires purchase of material planning, the importation of materials, the accreditation of eligible voters, presentation of voters' card, storage and management of electoral system database. The logistics during the elections involve the strategic positioning of security agencies and synthetic communication system with well-structured organograms among inter-governmental security agencies delineating their roles and responsibilities. Credible elections arise from well-organized timely arrangement of all personnel and materials involved for electoral service at the right place without hindrance from any external force or instrument to be used for the purpose of vote casting. The sectionalization of wards, the transportation of materials and personnel to various wards considering their distances, mode of transport, condition of security and functionality of equipment and the qualified personnel are essential during the period of election. As all the processes are sequential, the final stage of collation of election results, counting and recording is very sensitive critical and requires extra level of vigilance on the part of electoral officials. According to the Chairman of INEC, Prof. Manmood Yakubu at a conference on Logistics for the 2019 General Elections" the polling units are to be opened at 0800hours on the Election Day and INEC is expected to deliver personnel and electoral materials at 119,973 locations nationwide, however; all must be opened simultaneously (ECES, 2019).

The disbursement, tagging and carriage of all items must be done in such a way to curb diversion by putting well trained staff and government security agents in charge for adequate security. In order to take care of fluctuations, lead time and inaccuracy in planning, reasonable safety stock should accompanied the materials which must be accounted for and made public in the whole supply chain. Part of the major problems in electioneering process is the issue of some people not eligible to vote in previous year who are now qualify to vote and the data base has to be so increased (Somuyiwa, 2015).

## Challenges of Electoral Logistics in Nigeria

There are numerous challenges facing Independent National Electoral Commission in Nigeria. First, the commission does not have skilled manpower enough to handle the task it was set out to handle. The election is once mostly in four years except for bye and re-run elections. So, the need to keep idle workforce is not necessary and hence, the commission must source for ad-hoc staff before and during elections. The ad-hoc staff can misbehave though there are rules and regulations guiding them but unlike permanent staff who perhaps will understand that he/she's job is at stake if he/she misbehaves. Bonolo (2012) attributed some of the African region's challenges as planning, inadequate fund, infrastructure and human capital development. Secondly, the huge amount of money required for credible election is too much even it can gulp the budget a nation. Thirdly, on many occasions that the functionality of the card readers dependent on electricity which is to a large extent not guaranteed at all places, wards and polling units in Nigeria. When the electorates are ready to vote and the machine to capture them is not functional as a result of low battery, and the election results must be counted that same day; probably someone who was supposed to emerge winner may be denied. The issue of logistical problems can be attested to by many qualified and eligible voters who went back home as they were frustrated by in availability of election materials especially in 2011 Nigeria election (Bonolo, 2012). Madu (2011) explained that; one of the biggest problems faced by Nigerian elections is the politicians who have become nearly impossible to manage. The use of political thugs in the process of election, to scare people away, to maim and kill are issues of concern in political scene that can never produce the best candidate of people's choice. The problems of road network leading to some rural areas are terribly bad that; officials may result to doctored report exercise when those places are not accessible. Widge (2009) recorded the electoral situation in Sudan, "Static Registration Centres are located in central locations with higher populations. They are supported with teams that travel to remote areas of the South to register voters under the village tree and report back to the static centres". As much as it is good for Nigeria to have multiple electoral parties; it sometimes result to waste of scarce resources as most of the candidates are not really willing to contest but to create fame under the disguise of election. The multiple numbers of parties unnecessary makes the ballot paper very long and creating problems of party identification for less educated citizens. It is like having a double cost for voters accreditation exercise before the main voting when the two can be combined with an integrated information based voting system. The benefactors of manual voting may be responsible for non-adoption of e-voting system in Nigeria. On the part of the electorate, the first person to register will not come on time to claim his /her registration or will not present at all. In Sudanish 2009 election, different ballot papers were printed with different colour for legislative arm which is problematic and can pave way for fake ballot papers. The importance of supply chain can be felt by the citizens of Tripoli as Eljarh (2012) rightly stated because of the difficulties they do undergo to exercise their civic right "exercising the right to vote for someone requires much effort, as citizens might have to travel long distances and await

hours in front of a polling station in order to make their voice heard.” Inability to harness and deploy logistics resources can make unwanted candidate to win an election. When many people are not accessible to the polling centres or are frustrated due to the fact that it will bounce back to their health if they insist they must vote, definitely it is not there candidate that will win such election. The problem emanated from defects in planning and execution, poor voting sites, incorrect calculations of voting materials as well as appointment of inadequately trained electoral officers. In 2019 general election, there were hullabalos arising from the shift in date of election by a week some hours to the election for logistical reasons best known to INEC. According to Obisesan (2019) many eligible physically challenged voters are disenfranchised in Nigeria’s election because of the stress involved at polling booth and a lot of Nigerians in diaspora cannot perform their civic rights. Again, most people believe that incumbent government used to dictate the direction of election until 2015 general election where President Goodluck Jonathan lost to General Muhammed Buhari (rtd). The way and manner that INEC will address problems of social media’s influence on electoral matters; where someone can fabricate and spread news that is not emanating from the organization has not be discovered. There are several cases of vote buying and voters card stealing which are yet to be validated with evidence. The migration of voters from state to state and from different borders across the nation during elections is a matter that calls for critical analysis.

## METHODOLOGY

Nigeria is a country in Western part of Africa with forecasted population of about 180 million. Nigeria has 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The country is divided into six geo-political zones of North East, North West, North Central, South East, South South and South West. North East: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe. North West: Kaduna, Kastina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara. North Central: Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau. South East: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo. South South: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers. South West: Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Oyo states. Three strategic locations were purposively chosen for the collection of data which are Ekiti representing South West, Akwa Ibom representing South South, Anambra Representing South East, Yobe representing North East, Zamfara representing North West and Kwara representing North Central. Questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the challenges experienced by the electorates on the electoral logistics and possible way forward across about 230 sampled respondents using incidental sampling technique.

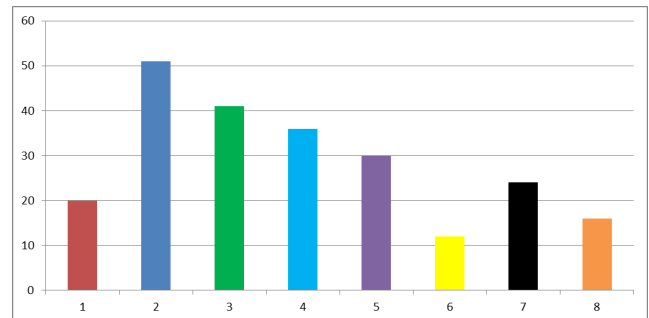
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The responses gathered on what the respondent perceived should be improved in electoral logistics in Nigeria are highlighted below:

- Late arrival of INEC staff/officials/ad-hoc staff
- Too long political parties ballot paper
- Security

- Machine problems of low batteries/non functionality
- Thug during election
- Vote buying
- Bad road network to most rural places/accessibility
- Shelter for voters

The perceptions of different people were synchronized into histogram shown below.

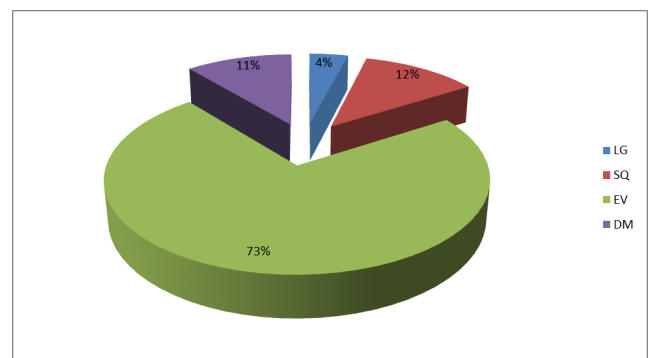


**Figure 1:** % of responses on electoral logistics Source: Author’s computation (2019)

More than 50% of the respondents attested to the late arrival of the INEC staff for the commencement of the election. This is indicated with deep blue colour in the figure 1 above. 20% of the respondents claimed that; shelter has not been provided in the logistics provision of INEC with the brick red colour. More than 41% as indicated with green colour of long ballot paper with many political parties. 36% represented by light blue colour deals with security and 30% represented deals with machine problem. Vote buying, thuggery and bad road constituted with 12%, 24% and 16% indicated with yellow, black and orange colors respectively.

### 4.1 Perception of electorates on way forward to electoral logistics challenges

On the question related to the way forward of electoral logistics, the pie chart below summarized the opinions of respondents. The opinions of the respondents were illustrated on three major constructs: improving the logistics (LG), improve staff quality and training/recruitment (SQ), adoption of e-voting system (EV) and durable machine for capturing (DM).



**Figure 2:** Way forward to electoral logistics in Nigeria

The figure 2 above shows the four categories of suggested way forward to the electoral system in Nigeria. 73% of sampled respondents suggested that e-voting system should be adopted in Nigeria to reduce the burden of electoral logistics and huge

financial commitment every four year. 12% noted that, the only solution is to train staff or recruit more qualified hands to the commission, while 11% expressed their way forward in form of having durable and quality equipment or card readers for the purpose of elections. 4% however, expressed that improving logistics in terms of transportation of election materials, handling of materials, among others is what INEC should work upon in the nearest future elections. It is obvious from the opinion of people that, the manual voting system is wearisome and hence another method should be adopted to improve electoral logistics and voting system in general in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There is no gain saying in the fact that; electoral logistics in Nigeria has challenges as enumerated from the findings. The local governments in Nigeria are divided into 774 local governments and also there are numerous number of wards in Nigeria. To this end, it can be suggested that; other option should be adopted especially e-voting to reduce the bogus expenses on electoral logistics relating to printing of ballot papers, security, travelling and delay in the announcement of election results. These local governments and wards can have their respective identification and bio metric database. It is not necessary that INEC officials must be present at each ward in this age of information technology. The most important thing is that; the information communication technology infrastructure must be put in place at strategic location and centrally connected for voting purposes. For instance, Television Programmes make use of online voting system. The provision of online based system of voting can be provided by INEC through the federal government and can be test-run using the created platform for local government election, or bye elections for pilot study. The representatives of political parties, the international observers, the candidates, the INEC officials and all the stakeholders must be at the central control room created for all the wards and national election in Nigeria and respective political offices can be monitored. This process should be monitored live on the national television broadcast. Alternatively, the government can partner with Telecommunication service providers in Nigeria to understand how data can be stored and the voting can be monitored and recorded. The use of online voting is believed to reduce litigations, curb unnecessary expenses, provides credible elections, increase transparency, increase voters' number, reduce

the stress of voters, voting at any time and the records of data availability. However, online voting can be hacked, once the saboteur gains access the whole exercise can be foiled. The network may not be available at all places in Nigeria, which may hinder the online process. Sequel to these challenges, the INEC or government must be ready and prepare against all these. It is not necessary Nigeria should keep measuring her activities by what is obtainable in developed economy; once we can adopt a technological solution that is good and workable for us; there is no need to compare our nation with others if we can set out standard by ourselves no doubt that other nations may emulate us. Singapore approached IBM for the creation of a computer that will enable her port operations to be synchronized with a central computer system and it was done. Solutions to Nigeria's challenges can be solved through our innovation and strong believe in ourselves. We have brought the idea of Bank Verification Number (BVN), Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System and National Identity Cards among others. So, the e-voting system can work very perfectly once we can adopt and work it out.

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