

Voter Education and Voter Outcomes in Ekiti State 2018 Gubernatorial Election

By

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Abstract

The issue of voter education is an important phenomenon in the political terrain of the world today, most especially in developing countries where information and right of choice in picking aspirant for elective positions are challenged. Electioneering processes have been seen as a problematic position particularly in developing nation like Nigeria. However, it has been established that positive outcomes of election can easily be achieved if voter education are vigorously given to the populace prior to and during election period. Hence, Ekiti state, been a volatile political environment became a focal point of attention during the Gubernatorial election in 2018. In order to dissect this voter education as a platform for positive outcomes of election in Ekiti state, Nigeria, the paper adopted descriptive methods in analysing documented facts that are available via secondary sources of data, like extant textbook, journal, internet sources, relevant to this study with the aid of Public Choice theory complimented by the Anomie theory and Deprivation theory. The paper found out that because of the stomach infrastructural architecture of the environment, the element of vote buying was at utmost increase. Paper equally found that voter education was not strong enough to permeate the entire state. Therefore, the outcome of the election was marred with irregularities, intimidation and power tussle from politicians. Consequently, the paper recommends a policy-based voter education structure in every Local Government Areas and a culture of civic rights in the educational curriculum of Nigeria schools in order to limit the advancement of vote buying and enhance quality of votes that will count in the future.

Keywords: Voter Education, Election, Gubernatorial Election, and Ekiti state.

Word Counts: 352

Introduction

Elections around the world today involved a lot of things. It is highly imperative for nations of the world most especially developing nations to inculcate and imbibe international practices in their electioneering process if the concept of free and fair elections are to be achieved. One major instrument to measure and ascertain good processes apart from monitoring exercises by independent bodies both locally and internationally is the issue of voter education or sensitization of the citizenry on election processes, choice of aspirant, influence or propaganda but on merit with no iota of inducement. The importance of voter education bring about dissemination of information, materials and programmers' designed to inform voters about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election.

The provision of this information includes eligibility, registration point, voter's lists checking, card reader usage, the type of elections being held, date of election, how to vote and aspirant for what and which position vying for. According to Akintayo (2015) the role of voter education in any electoral process cannot be underestimated. It is very important that voter education is given in order for election to be successful. Voters are ready, willing and able to participate in electoral politics when enough education had been given. Voter education involves election literacy, educational campaign and confidences that the electoral process is appropriate and effective in selecting their representative through the electoral process. Voter education aims at creating a climate of knowledgeable participation by all potential voters in an election. It also seeks to enable potential voters to cast their vote with confidence and achieve stipulated objective

Voter education should be provided even on Election Day, there should be posters and other materials inside the polling stations and even inside the voting booths, explaining the voting process and how to mark the ballots (U.N.D.P 2003). The nature of civic education is overwhelming that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) cannot carry it out alone. There have been participations of other Non-Governmental Organizations, Media houses and civil right activists being vocal to the voters to do the right thing before, during and after the elections. This has been in form of Advertisement, jingles, radio and television programmers among others. The need for a knowledge-based approach to voter education, and indeed all activities of the Commission, cannot be overemphasized. In the past three years, this has been a cardinal consideration in the Commission's work. It is expected that this will be an important reference point for the future work of the Institute in the area of civic and voter education (Jega, 2014).

The 2018 Ekiti governorship election will not only rekindles old rivalries between two political parties, the PDP and APC; but also between two formidable opponents and strongmen of Ekiti politics, Fayose and Fayemi. Subterranean external interests, most notably by the ruling APC at the centre, symbolized by the presidency; and their 2019 permutations, only serve to add troubling twists and turns to the election. The import of the preceding is that the election promises to be highly competitive, laced with electoral risk factors that could degenerate into violence. To be sure, several parties and candidates are set to contest in the election. However, the primary contest seems to be between the APC and PDP. This has been the

pattern of electoral contests in the state since 1999. However, this does not foreclose the possibility of surprises by smaller parties.

Statement of the Problem

In every election, the role of education is paramount and highly essential. The reason for such is simply to keep abreast, sensitize and provide necessary information to aid electorates in their decision making towards the election, selection of candidate and how to safeguard their voting right without fear or inducement from anybody. Therefore, if voters are not prepared or motivated to participate in the electoral process, questions may begin to arise about the: legitimacy, representativeness and responsiveness of elected leaders and the electoral commission.

Consequently, during every election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is poised to organize voter education in conjunction with many organizations and institutions like NGOs, International Organizations, Pressure groups, Tertiary Institutions just to mention a few in promoting such platform to enhance the outcome of election. However, it is unfortunate that during election many devices are perpetrated by political actors in the effort to win more vote to themselves.

Politics in Ekiti State, like in other places, is full of intrigues and its dynamics make it unpredictable. The gale of defections, most especially from the PDP to the APC, following the poor handling of party primaries and candidate selection process, mainly as the election drew closer, remains a source of worry. Also the rise in the level of political thuggery, including the violent attacks during election campaigns and killing of perceived opponents (Barkan, 2017).

Despite the voter's education done in Ekiti gubernatorial election, the election was still highly characterized by the act of vote buying even in the midst of heavy military participation. Political egocentrism displayed by the then incumbent Governor, thuggery, and mahram was perpetrated all in the effort to gain political power by the two contending parties (APC and PDP). Furthermore, Omotola (2018) pointed seemingly endless political ridiculing, of the PDP by APC all in an effort to show that he won in all the 16 local government while PDP has no vote to show control in any of the grassroots area. Therefore, it is all these intrigue of electioneering process which one way or the other seems to negate the role of voter education done prior to election proper that is motivating the researcher to conduct and examine many of the aforementioned problems to see actually if voter education done was not effective and to ascertain if other factors could equally be responsible other than the ones mentioned above.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the voter education and voter outcomes of election during the Gubernatorial Election in Ekiti State 2018. The specific objective is:

1. Examine the effectiveness of voter education during the gubernatorial election in Ekiti state, 2018.
2. Identify associated problems that resulted into the reason for the outcome of the gubernatorial election in Ekiti state, 2018.

Literature Review

This section will focus on the relevant literature as well as the theoretical framework for the study. Under the review, the study will first do a conceptual analysis of certain concepts germane to the paper after which the paper will discuss in details some argument as posited by various scholars on the issue of the gubernatorial election of Ekiti state, 2018. The study will move further to deliberate on the outcome of the election and present certain interesting scenario that might be element of concern to the public, INEC, government and policy makers to curb or correct for future improvement of electioneering process in Nigeria as a whole. Furthermore, the study will dwell on the theoretical framework which will form the platform upon which the research will be based. Three theories will be engaged. The main theory will be Public-Choice Theory while the complimentary theory will be Anomie and lastly Ted Robert Gurr Relative Deprivation Theory.

Voter Education

Voter education data consists of all pertinent information about the electoral contests, the candidates and parties running, and any initiative introduced in the election administration. In many countries this information is available in multiple languages using different platforms to communicate to voters. More importantly, it is the responsibility of all electoral stakeholders and not only the Election Management Body (EMB), as often articulated. In this reporting period, June 8 to 21, 2018, WTV (watching the vote organization) continued to track voter education activities conducted by the key electoral actors, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The result of the analysis for the period, reveals that there are no incremental efforts on voter education by all the electoral actors. Only 29% of WTV LTOs were exposed to voter education workshop by INEC, as compared to 33% of LTOs in the last reporting period and 26% of the LTOs by CSOs as against 29% the last time.

Voter education on the other hand could be considered as a subset of civil education, focusing more specifically on the role of the citizen as a voter. This will include knowledge around several issues including the duties and obligations of a voter, voting procedure, political parties and candidates, electoral offences, counting procedures, the responsibilities of the election management body and mandate protection. Indeed, voter education is designed to equip the citizen with knowledge about the entire gamut of the electoral process (Okechukwu and Nkwachukwu, 2014)

According to Akintayo (2015) the role of voter education in any electoral process cannot be underestimated. It is very important that voter education is given in order for election to be successful. Information is a key source to power, hence, voters are to be empowered with basic knowledge on why, how and when to vote because such elements are essential for a successful free and fair election. The reason above cemented why Jega (2014) opine for a knowledge-based approach to voter education, and indeed all activities of the Commission. In the past three years, according to him, such has been a cardinal consideration in the Commission's work.

An Overview of Political Participation and Voter's Turnout in Nigeria

Political participation is the involvement of citizens in political and especially, electoral processes, which is a fundamental requirement for representative democracy. Powell, (2014) sees electoral participation as one of the three main indicators of democratic performance. Unfortunately, there has been a trend of declining electoral turnout and generally, a low level of political participation in most democracies, Nigeria inclusive. Many Nigerians are indifferent in political events and especially, electoral matters. The explanation according to Dahl and Stinebrickner, (2015), says people are not by instinct civic-minded beings. Many of our most imperious desires and the source of many of our stronger gratifications can be traced to ancient and persistent biological and physiological drives. Commenting on the level of political apathy displayed by Nigerian citizens in the 2011 General Elections, the INEC Chairman, and Prof. Attahiru Jega lamented: "that there exists voters? Apathy in Nigeria is no longer contentious. Voter's turnout in the just concluded general elections had provided a scientific and empirical evidence of voters? Apathy and disinterestedness of sections of the electorates in elections..." (Odebode, 2011).

The statistics from INEC on the just concluded 2015 general elections puts voter turnout at 43.65% out of 67,422,005 registered voters. This is indicative of a further decline in voter turnout in elections. In general, low voter turnout is often considered to be undesirable for any democracy because, voting is seen to occupy the central place in democratic politics as well as one of the key forms of citizens' involvement in politics. Powell, (2014).

Broadly, Vergne, (2009), Falade, (2011) and Amdi, (2014) have identified some factors that affect political participation and voter turnout. Vergne, (2009) holds that, the expected benefit of voting depends on some variables. Very importantly is that, based on the policy packages that the electorates prefer to be carried out and the parties or leaders they prefer to be in governance. This implies that, there should be at least one party offering the type of candidates and policies that voters prefer, otherwise they will not benefit from the voting and abstaining will be rational to them. Indeed, when there is no policy package or leader that appeals to the citizens, they simply just stay away from the polls.

Amdi, (2014) identifies the institutional arrangement of the Nigerian state as a major factor for low voter turnout. He maintains that, the democratic process and political participation in Nigeria is a learning one and this is so because, the democratic structures and institutions are very fragile and coupled with low level of democratic culture of the citizens resulting from long years of military dictatorship. These fragile democratic structures have affected the political processes thereby, reducing the measure of confidence in the political process by the citizens. This has greatly affected the extent to which they will participate in a political system. Falade (2011) says that politics in Nigeria is influenced by money, ethnic and religious factors. Since independence in 1960 he maintains, religious and ethnic politics characterize electioneering process and that is why it is practiced with bitterness, hatred and rancour. The result of this is, the apathetic and passive feeling of the citizens leading to low voter turnout.

Again, deceit and unfulfilled promises by political leaders also discouraged a number of Nigerians from participating in electoral processes. Falade, (2014) argues further that, politicians make promises during election campaigns. Most of these promises are often not fulfilled after they have been voted in to power and as a result many voters lose interest in elections and generally become indifferent towards subsequent one.

Political Education: A Strategy for Curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

There is a galaxy of ways that Nigeria could use to curb electoral violence and strengthen democratic governance. They include: constitutional amendment; electoral reform; pressure from civil society groups through agenda-setting; change in the character of the elite; political education etc. The most important of them which forms the fulcrum of this paper is: political education. All others rest on its effectiveness (Husted, 2015). It has been argued at several fora that the significance and utility of political education cannot be over-emphasized. This is because political education as it were is the conduit-pipe through which the political cultural values and behavioral patterns of the society are imbibed and internalized political socialization. In any case, since Nigerians is a religious country, religious books emphasize the need for acquisition of knowledge as an instrument for guiding and girding against the wiles of the enemy in all societies, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore, there is the need for Nigerians to have a fore and deeper knowledge of causes, manifestations, dimensions, consequences and ways of curbing the phenomenon.

Since education has been identified as the launch-pad of a nation-state's development agenda, political education constitutes a herculean task for the several agents of education in Nigeria. For schools as agent of socialization and social change, the need to abhor all forms of violence must be incorporated into our school curriculum. The political education that the pupils and students would receive will both in the short and long term deepen our political culture and socialization processes. Therefore, Nigerians should know the dynamic nature of our politics, and the emerging trends that shape the political culture and determine the direction of political socialization, and in relation to electoral violence, should learn, imbibe and internalize the political sociology of electoral behaviour education. This would help the nation to either make or mar its emerging democratic order (Jackman, 2016).

Sociologically, politics marred by violence is synonymous with the politics of bitterness that would create an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and arson; and would not allow the people to choose their leaders. Such politics undermine competitive electoral politics and alienate the citizens politically and make them politically apathetic, and create a fundamental disjuncture between the civil society and the state. This deeply-rooted problem contributes to growing cases of mass disenfranchisement of the citizens with its attendant political normlessness and exclusion which does not help to deepen and consolidate our democracy. The citizens also need to know and appreciate the workings of the nation's election management body (Independent National Electoral Commission) including the enabling legal framework. This framework outlines the amendment of the 1999 Constitution, the 2010 Electoral Law (Act), and other related regulations and rules to enhance the integrity, relevance, and adequacy of the institutional reform of INEC. That understanding must include citizenship education that encompasses a good understanding of the legal basis of electoral governance with a very useful model that operates at three levels: (a.) rule making; (b.) rule

application, and, (c.) rule adjudication (Aiyede, 2008 while quoting Mozaffar and Schedler, 2012).

This legal basis stipulates the punishment to be meted out to electoral offenders no matter how highly placed. Legally and constitutionally too, an Election Malpractice Tribunal should be established as recommended by the Justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais' Electoral Reform Committee. The Tribunal would enable cases to be discharged expeditiously. With the necessary political will, this development would help stamp out the culture of impunity so that perpetrators of electoral offences can be prosecuted and be held accountable for such offences. There must be evidence of prosecution of violators since a climate and culture of impunity will undo the best rules or regulations (see Joseph et al, 2015). It is based on the above that scholars have argued that government should ensure that the Justice Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reform Recommendations are fully implemented through legislation by the National Assembly (Joseph et al, 2015).

Politically, and in terms of development, leaders who emerge as products of violence-prone elections are not likely to be the people's choice, and are not likely to consider the peoples' opinion on policies and issues that affect their daily lives. While such leaders lack legitimacy by procedure, they may spend their entire term in office trying to secure legitimacy by results which may not lead to necessary people-oriented policies because aggrieved citizens that had suffered mandate theft may withdraw into their cocoon, and from the arena of the state. In this regard, a state that have agenda of development and yearns for sustainable national development should educate its citizenry about the inherent dangers of allowing an entrenched culture of electoral fraud (vote-buying) and political violence as part of the features of the political system.

Organizations Partnering with INEC on Voter Education

Various organs of the government have aided voter education which includes the non-governmental organizations, political parties, interest groups, universities in exploring. Voter education to enhance outcome Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) which is the transition monitoring group. The aforementioned have helped voter education in various ways, through their unique forms. The TMG has helped voting and enhanced voter education through the effective use of the Control Room in monitoring elections.

Pressure groups also known as interest groups have also aided voter education and voter outcomes by setting ultimatums such that the people would be able to gain from. Example such interest group is the Nigerian Labour Congress which in recent times have raised the bar high for current aspirants, this particular interest group has also made it clear that administration whose objective is not stated clearly about the work force wouldn't be recognized. This position has enforced a more democratic and more provisions for inclusions which would help voter education and boost voter outcomes to make electoral processes less corrupt and to enlighten aspirants on choices of candidate to pick.

Political parties have also been a huge part of voter education, especially recent times with formation of new political parties which have now influenced voter education through their enlightenment on how to vote, where to vote, who to vote for, this has been done mostly by

Modern Democratic Political Party which has young and bright visionaries for the country. This party has taken voter education from physical to a more accessible platform such as the internet and this act has been able to help with voter's education and also promote democracy.

And lastly universities which is an educational institution has enhanced voter education with support from INEC. For example, educational institutions like Babcock University during the 2015 presidential election sensitized the people within the Ilishan community on how to vote, when to vote and other voting related issues, this intuition further explained to the literate and non-literate on certain intricacies associated with voting and this has helped the Ilishan community and its environ. This collaboration with INEC has enhanced voter education which yielded fruitful outcome in electoral process of 2015.

Gubernatorial Election in Ekiti State, 2018

The aspiration for a free and fair election has always been a desire of the Nigeria state (Ojo, 2008), however, such desire has eluded the state as a result of many intrigues seen during electioneering period. The Ekiti Gubernatorial election is a much more eye opener to a new parlance and style in inducing electorate. The evident of vote-buying during this election has caused a lot of electoral shamble in the country. The election is another episode of massive voter buying by the two major political parties, All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

It sadden that the deployment of 30,000 police operatives, 19,997 NSCDC personnel, surveillance vehicles, sniffer dogs and many soldiers, one would expect that the election will be devoid of any form of malpractice. While the poll was generally peaceful, the police dispersed the opposition party, PDP's supporters in a campaign venue, and arrested many of the party's leader's days before the election.

The zenith of it is the security operatives' deliberate allowance of a high level of open vote buying, what the PDP accused the APC of doing "see and buy" implying that the voters have to show the APC operatives (agents) their ballot paper to confirm they voted for the party before paying. Other cases of malpractices are ballot box snatching and dispersal of PDP supporters at polling units considered PDP strongholds. The level of vote buying in this election has become subject of public discourse generating intense debate far more than before. The reason is obvious, while the incident of vote buying has steadily increased since 1999, the money paid per vote skyrocketed in the 2018 Ekiti governorship election.

In the history of Nigerian elections, the 2007 presidential election which former president Olusegun Obasanjo dubbed a "do or die affair" was the most fraudulent and monetized election. As monetized as the 2007 general elections were, as reported in the press, voters were paid as high as 2000 naira. However, in the just concluded Ekiti election, voters were paid as high as 10000 naira's representing 500% increase in the value of a vote from 2007. An online news media, Pulse, quoted an aggrieved voter as saying "PDP middlemen are distributing N3, 000 instead of N5, 000" (Pulse, 2018) implying that the voter is displeased by the amount the PDP is offering. Thus, the election was like an auction market where the highest bidder buys the good. The view of Mr Sesugh Akume, the National Publicity Secretary

of the Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party (ANRP) as quoted in an article by the Premium Times corroborates it, “Elections for sale where the highest bidder carries the day are akin to a death knell on our democracy. What we have presently is democracy for sale – a democracy that perpetuates ignorance, poverty, violence and underdevelopment”.

This ugly trend is entrenching the practice of corrupting the system to earn illicit money in order to buy votes from an impoverished and psychologically-damaged populace. This leads to politicians offering bad governance, gaining illicit wealth in the process and repeating the cycle (Premium Times 2018). Equally, an investigation by one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria, Sun indicates that the two major political parties in the election, the PDP and APC took part in vote buying. The reporter of the Sun Newspaper, Ismail Omipidan notes that, an average Ekiti voter yesterday became instantly rich. Depending on who the voter must have cast his/her ballot for, the least an average voter got was N2, 500 and this happened in Isan-Ekiti. If those who got the N2, 500 had benefited the initial N4, 000 from the other party, the voter would have smiled home with N6, 500. But in Oye, where one of the parties began with N7, 000 per voter, before raising it to N10, 000, which was only delivered to the voter after casting his/her ballot, such a voter would go home with between N14, 000 and N11, 000 if the voter had benefited from the other party’s N4, 000 which was distributed a day to the election (Omipidan, 2018, Sunday Sun, 15 July 2018).

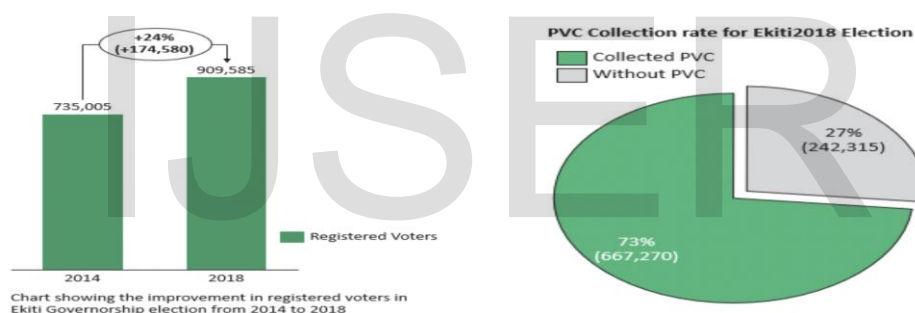
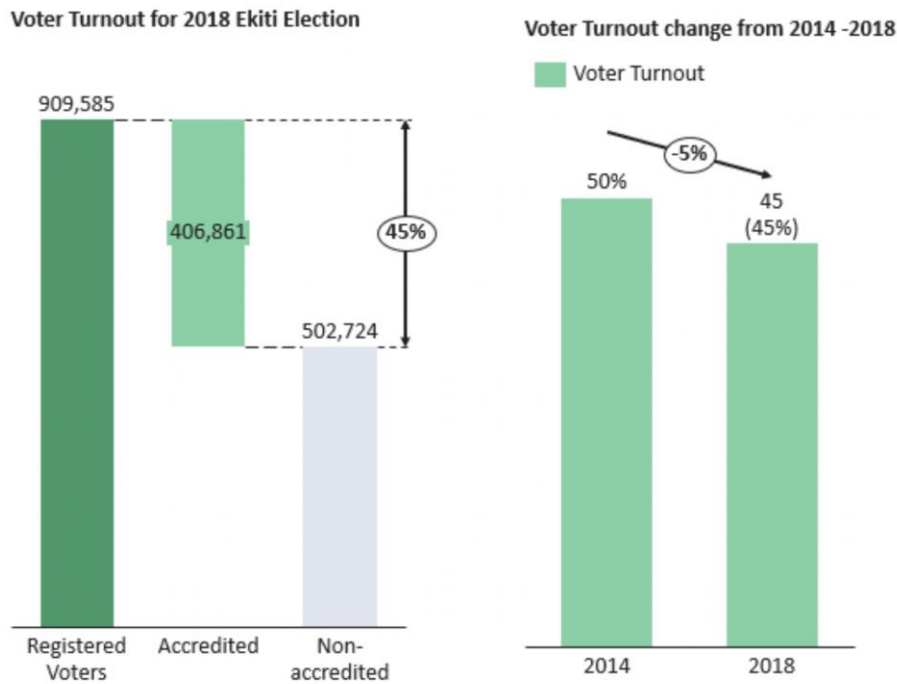


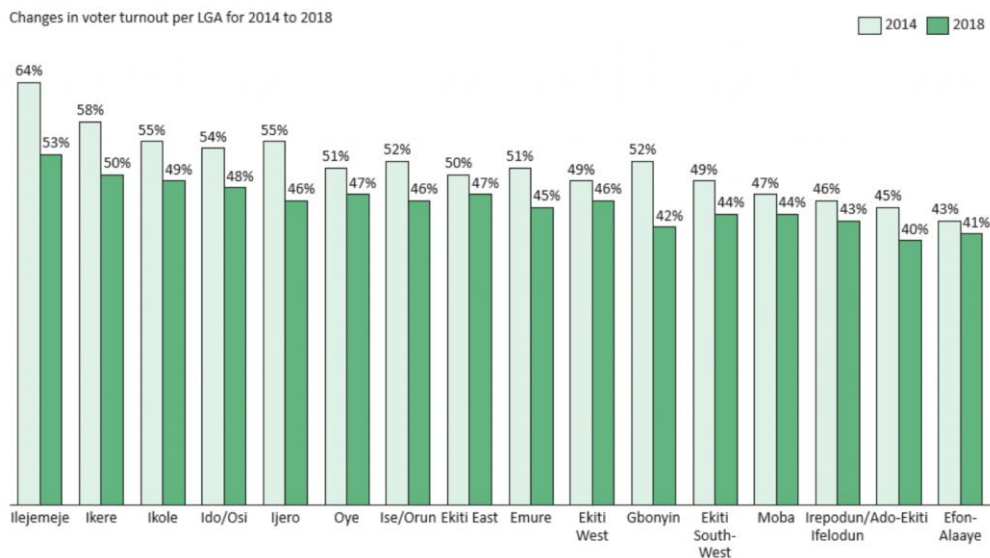
Chart showing the improvement in registered voters in Ekiti Governorship election from 2014 to 2018

Source: www.thecable.ng/election-numbers-data-says-ekitidecides2018



Source: www.thecable.ng/election-numbers-data-says-ekitidecides2018

Despite the progress made with voter registration, a twin challenge persists. On one hand, only 73% of registered voters picked their permanent voters card (PVC), while on the other hand, only 45% of registered voters turned out for the election. Why did people who took the pain of register to participate in elections refuse to pick their voter’s card? Is it a problem of political apathy and irresponsibility of electorates or is the challenge around the process of PVC collection? These are the kind of questions that need objective answers beyond rhetoric, but the data needed to answer them are largely unavailable.



Source: www.thecable.ng/election-numbers-data-says-ekitidecides2018

Although voter registration climbed by 24% from 2014, the percentage of registered voters that turned out to be accredited fell from 50% in 2014 to 45% in 2018. Clearly, there are leakages of political capital along the electoral process. Only two Local Government areas in the state (Ilejemeje and Ikere LGAs), had turnout above 50% in the 2018 polls, with Ilejemeje having 53% and Ikere having 50%. Ado-Ekiti the state capital had the lowest voter turnout of all LGAs in the state with 40% of registered voters being accredited for the election. The voter turnout is especially worrying when compared on an LGA-by-LGA basis to the 2014 polls when 10 of the 16 LGAs in the state achieved over 50% voter turnout, with Ilejemeje and Ikere LGAs with leading voter turnout of 64% and 58% respectively. How come more people registered to vote but less of them turned out to be accredited for the election? The puzzle continues.

However, there is a slight beacon of light with respect to voter turnout that we could be somehow excited about. 61% of those who have collected their PVC turned out to be accredited for the election, a term we could call the adjusted voter turnout. The adjusted voter turnout represents the proportion of people with the requisite voting tool (the permanent voter's card in the case of Nigeria) who were accredited to vote in an election (Suleiman, 2013).

Discussion of Findings

This section looked at the research objectives. Therefore in the research objective one which says; what is the effectiveness of voter education in Ekiti state gubernatorial election 2018, the study revealed that voter education was challenged as a result of the stomach infrastructural architecture of the citizens. However, the outcome of the election indicated a positive role played by voter education due to the attendance of voters and the ability of the people to vote out the incumbent governor Fayose and put Fayemi the APC candidate despite the challenges that prevailed the electioneering processes. This position was supported by the CTA (2018) that contrary to widespread fears that the massive deployment of security personnel will scare away voters from polling booths, the turnout was generally massive. A total of 405, 861 out of 913, 3345 registered voters turned out to cast their votes. The outcome of this is not a departure of the effect of voter education in term of, sensitization and promotion by INEC, NGOs and Civil societies in line with procedures of election.

The second objective state that what are the associated problems that resulted into the reason for the outcome of the gubernatorial election in Ekiti state, 2018. The paper revealed that though the election was characterized with intrigues, corrupt practices, "vote buying and vote seeing", heavy deployment of various force personnel, arrest and intimidation; eventually, the outcome was peaceful with no violence or death. Furthermore, the outcome may also be connected with the way people were informed to still make their vote count in respective of influences, and element of money inducement. Hence, the paper suggest that the voter education conducted still prevail to establish the outcome of the election where the whole 16 local government areas were taken over by the APC party. Again, this position was supported by Nwankwo (2018) and CTA (2018) when they note that the 2018 governorship election in Ekiti state despite the prediction of Armageddon and hate speeches coupled with

vote buying did not record a single death or violence. This election was not only generally peaceful but witnessed a large turnout of voters. This narrative is a departure from the previous elections held in Ekiti.

Conclusion

Voter's participation depends highly on the voter education the citizens have. Therefore, when there is poor voter's education, it would lead to poor level of voter's participation in the electoral systems and the quality of democracy. Over the years, in the Nigerian history there has been poor voters' education which has always led to a poor level of voter's participation in Nigeria, but in the 2018 Ekiti state election there was a lot of voter's awareness and education programmes to sensitize its citizens on how to vote and the importance of voting. From this study we equally realise that irrespective of the voter education, votes were still bought and another form of electoral malpractice took place, which was "vote buying and vote seeing" hence in order to curb this trend of practices, the paper is recommending:

1. Government to introduce a technology based system which would reduce the problems of the election; such as the vote buying. This would make the electoral process easier and more reliable because the votes would be counted by the system.
2. that government should focus on more voter education to reduce political apathy and set up more programmes to train voters on how to vote. Emphasis should be on why they are voting and whom they are voting for.

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