

# Electoral Process and Micro Level Rigging in 2015 General Elections in Anambra West and Awka North Local Government Areas of Anambra State <sup>1</sup>

By

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## Abstract

The improvement in the planning and conduct of 2015 general election by INEC reduced to a reasonable extent, certain kinds of election rigging, especially those one commonly known to Nigerian elections and increased the value of individual votes. With it, both the politicians and the electorates came to appreciate the importance of every ballot paper in winning election. It however brought into the fore a new but dangerous forms of vote buying, especially in the remotest areas of Anambra state, where the negative effect of bad governance has already increased the poverty level, making the elections avenues for making profit out of balloting and voters card. Guided by the Political Economy Approach, and with knowledge of the increasing contest for the maintenance of the stomach infrastructure, occasioned by the deepening poverty, this paper tries to situate this evolving democratic ill of wide vote buying and its implication on consolidating democracy through credible elections in Nigeria. It also develops a model of options to help the electoral body in planning against such vice in the future elections in Nigeria. The data for this study was picked from primary and secondary sources while the ‘Analytical Inductive Technique’ was applied for data analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper submitted for the Two – Day National Conference on “The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Real Issues” scheduled for June 17 - 18, 2015 by The Electoral Institute (TEI), of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

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## Introduction

A survey of the history of elections in Nigeria shows that it has been characterized by massive frauds, intimidation and even assassination of political opponents (Okoye, 2011:3). In many ways election in Nigeria was classified as being akin to war. As explained by Jega (2012), the massive mobilization by the election commission is akin to preparations for a major war. Using the 2011 elections, he explained that it

... required the assemblage of close to a million poll workers, party workers, security personnel and election observers. The election entailed the acquisition of over 120,000 ballot boxes, printing of about 400 million ballot papers and managing a voter's roll of over 73 million entries. In fact, in the registration of voters that preceded the elections, the machines used in the exercise would have formed a chain of over eighty kilometers if placed end to end and the over 400,000 staff used in the exercise outnumbered the collective strength of the entire armed forces of the West African sub-region. For added measure, the electoral commission had to organize all these across very challenging geographical and social terrains.

This was presumably to ensure that the elections are free, fair and credible. Yet, several records had essentially characterized Nigerian elections as not presenting the people with any right of choice. At best, according to Ake (1995); "what is foisted ... is a ... crude simplicity of multi party elections... which is not the least emancipatory ... because it offers the people rights they cannot exercise, voting that never amount to choosing, freedom which is spurious and political equality, which disguises highly asymmetrical power relations". At worst, it can be represented as mere exercise as the decisions are usually made before the elections. Hence, the situation that are seen in the instances some members of the political class tells others, especially those aspiring for elective positions that there are no vacancies in the positions they are aspiring for. The wise ones understand that averment while those that insists on contesting sometimes meet unexplainable situations in elections.

In reality, what we experienced in Nigeria are physical attacks on INEC staff and facilities, attacks on security personnel on election duties, misuse of security orderlies by politicians, especially incumbents, attacks on opponents, attacks on members of the public, violence at campaigns, intimidation of voters snatching of election materials, kidnapping and assassination of political opponents (Jega, 2012). All these made the elections not free, not fair and not credible. In testimony to this, *The Economist* (2011) explained that results of elections come in two separate columns in Nigeria. While one records the votes cast at polling stations, the other records the number of people killed around the time of the election. This is a clear indication of the magnitude of violence that is an integral part of and characterizes Nigerian electoral politics. Indeed, in the words of Ugandan (2010:90), the electoral process in Nigeria, characterized by vote buying, vote rigging and outright violence, remains incapable of producing a leadership imbued with the spirit of public accountability.

While the situation was bad generally, Anambra state presents a unique situation. Explained by mass apathy, excessive involvement of ‘money bags’ and use of money, etc, Anambra state has a reputation of having very horrible records in elections. Reporting on the situation of 2003 general elections in Anambra state, Nwanegbo (2005) explained how people were held hostage by the soldiers for over an hour, the election materials moved away from the INEC office accompanied by the ad-hoc staff, security personnel and the PDP agents. Eventually when people got to their various polling stations they did not see the materials nor the people that took them out of the collection centers. While they were still wondering what happened, election results were being announced at the state radio (ABS). Again, it is on record that for some two elections before 2015, the PDP have had a minimum of two candidates contesting one elective position at the same against other candidates of other parties. With the multiple candidates, the PDP would always triumph over other parties single candidates with INEC looking incapable to doing anything to establish order in the elections. After the elections, PDP’s many candidates would move to the courts of law to determine who the right candidate would eventually be, sometimes, with Supreme Court proclamations after the other person had spent the whole period in the position for the entire four (4) years (see Emeka Vs Okadigbo).

These became the lasting features of the Nigerian electoral cycle and situation of elections in Anambra state. Some people even thought that it might be getting worse, going by the terrible violence that followed the 2011 elections, notwithstanding that the whole world praised those elections as easily the best that the country has ever had (see Jega, 2012).

This is not unconnected with the poor processes in Nigeria electoral system. Indeed, electoral process is essential and lays solid foundation for democracy and defects on any segment could jeopardize or truncate democratic survival. Electoral processes can contribute to peace—or they can be catalysts of conflict (UNDP 2009). The point is that any conduct that threatens the electoral process is a subversion of the peoples’ sovereignty (see Idowu, 2010). Owing to the obvious importance, several calls have been made for a reform of Nigeria’s electoral system and practice to contain some definable characters that could make it become essential and engender the confidence of the Nigerian public in elections and the democratic process in the country (Iwu, 2008:1). Among the experimental propositions for the reform of Nigeria’s electoral system and practice is the e-voting option which is though not discountenanced but has not fully become implemented. Others include the several options that brought incremental, though substantial improvement in the 2015 General elections in Nigeria and in the few different state elections that started with the declaration of the Supreme Court on Anambra State elections after Peter Obi’s recovered mandate in 2007.

Part of the fall outs of the reforms and improvements in Nigeria election was the obvious signs of independence of the INEC essentially introduced by the character of the Commission now, the show of preparedness by the Commission in the recent past (2015) election and the improvement in the information dissemination, voter education, improvement in other sectors of preparation; security management, logistics (transports, etc). Wittingly or unwittingly, political parties and

gladiators matched up with the spate of preparation by INEC and strengthened their campaigns and voters appeal, deepening in the process, the knowledge on the electorates that their votes had the answer in determining the outcome of the elections. Still in follow-up, a different dimension of rigging though not very strange to Nigerian elections but came in different manifest forms: Open buying of votes in a form characteristic of an open (nay black) market model of trading became widespread and deepened in certain sectors of the country, especially Anambra state. That is what we here categorized as ‘Micro-Level Rigging’ which involves the process of targeting the individual and making him to vote or respond in specific manner, not driven by conventional methods of vote appeals. This which connotes a whole lot activities can include threats to compel voting, offer of gifts during election like rice, salt, other items, giving of money (cash) within the environment of voting to buy votes, etc constitutes a great challenge to democratic elections as condition the voting and generate result using abnormal methods. Specifically, this paper looks at the aspect that deals with open vote buying because of the novel manner of its operation in the 2015 election and the likely implication it would have in democratic elections in Nigeria if it is not contained with at this early stage.

This work tries to determine the reasons/causes, dimensions/magnitude and implication of this act of open vote buying in 2015 general election in Anambra state as well to democratic elections in Nigeria generally and proffers a solution to such menace in future elections.

This paper proceeds in five steps. It begins with this introduction, providing a background to the nature of election and the 2015 general election. The second part dwells on the conceptual and methodological issues of the work. Part three is on the emergence and development of micro-level rigging in Anambra state elections. The next part empirically looks at the dimension of vote buying in 2015 general election, while part five is on the implication of such practice in Anambra elections. Finally, the methods to be adopted by the state and INEC to curtail occurrence of such practice in future elections and conclusion came in to end the discussions in the paper.

## **Conceptual and Methodological Discourses**

There seems to be consensus among scholars on the indispensability and contribution of electoral process to any political system and on the meaning too (see Jinadu, 1997; Nwanegbo and Alumona, 2011; Ajayi, 2007; Ellis 2006). According to Akamere (2001) electoral process refers to all the activities and procedures involved in the election of representatives by the electorates. Jinadu (1997) earlier in his submission contended that electoral process refers to all the pre election and post election activities without which an election is unfeasible. For him:

by electoral process is meant the rules, procedures and activities relating to, among others, the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of their members, the registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting,

counting of the ballots, the declaration of results, the selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voter education and, in some cases, registration of political parties and supervision of party nomination congresses (Jinadu 1997).

It thus, means that electoral process covers the totality of activities that guarantee fair process to the conduct of election. Nwanegbo and Alumona (2011) explained that the process is normally guided by the different principles or systems that are meant to ensure that the electorate expresses their political preferences accordingly. They further observed:

... that in developed democracies, the process is characterized with strict adherence to the rules and regulations of the electoral process as stipulated by the constitution and the electoral law. The political environment is peaceful and stable. But in many emerging democracies, the process has always posed serious problems for democratic sustenance because it is characterized with outright disregard for the rules and regulations that are supposed to guide the process (Nwanegbo and Alumona 2011).

Similarly, in the opinion of Nwabueze and Chukwu (2005), electoral process embraces all the institutional procedures, arrangement and actions involved in election (cited in Ajayi 2007). To the United Nations' Development Programme (2009) electoral processes are fundamentally about the attainment of political power; often in high-stakes contexts, they can sometimes be a catalyst or accelerator of conflict. It further stated that experiences have shown that electoral contests can elevate social tensions and provoke violence, especially when the electoral process itself is not perceived to be free and fair, or where those seeking to retain or gain political power have few or no qualms about resorting to extraordinary measures—including the use of force—to win (UNDP 2009). For Ellis (2006) good electoral processes do not pre-judge the nature of society and who should represent whom; indeed, electoral processes are about defining what is meant by 'representation'. Ndulu and lulo (2010) explained electoral process as an alternative to violence is a means of achieving governance. In their view, when an electoral process is perceived as unfair, unresponsive or corrupt, its political legitimacy is compromised and stakeholders are motivated to go outside the established norms to achieve their political objectives. Since electoral process is essential and lays solid foundation for democracy, defects on any segment could jeopardize or truncate democratic survival.

Electoral processes can contribute to peace but if it is not well structured for equal opportunities, it can be a catalyst of conflict (UNDP 2009). A good electoral process will allow society on its own to determine the nature of its similarities and differences. Indeed, since electoral process encompasses all activities relating to acquisition of state power, evolving a sustained structure that would ensure that undue advantage is not given to one person is a requisite condition for strengthening the electoral process. The point is that any conduct that threatens the electoral process is a subversion of the peoples' sovereignty (see Idowu, 2010). That indeed is why INEC

appear to have strived to make the system/process strong and systematic to reduce both the possibilities and actual subversion of the people's views and interests and hence conflicts. The drive for this as can be gotten from Jega (2012) came after much efforts at the 2011 election yielded commendable result but still multiplied violence, conflicts and increased insecurity, especially, the post-election violence which led to the death of many including youth corper in some parts of Northern Nigeria. Several and committed efforts by INEC led to reasonable advancements and affected the disposition of both the electorates and political gladiators and therefore the people and party's planning in the 2015 general elections. This was achieved through strengthening implementation of the reasonable rules, entering into understanding with and using senior academics in the collation of results at certain levels and in returning the results. The merits is that the outright pervasion of the electoral process and announcement of result without recourse to the results collated from the field was reduced as those responsible for the actions has increased stake with responsible persons coming into the project. This was unlike the situation in the past when anything goes in the elections. The improvement on the voter education was also noticed as both the political parties and INEC intensified efforts to improve on the consciousness the civil society. The introduction of the card reader also sent a dispirited signals to election riggers and the out-balanced the political parties' machineries. All these amounted to improvement in the electoral process and reduced the pressure for rigging.

Incidentally, while these improvements in the electoral process reduced the conventional rigging earlier known to Nigerian electoral system and the attendant violence, they brought in a unique and more subtle system of pervasion which capitalized on the vulnerability of the poor majority to vote buying it still led to distortions of the performance/voting equilibrium, retained the ills that were supposed to have been cut off by the improvement in the electoral process and still perverted the electoral process.

This system of inducing voting with money is however not new to the literature of elections and rigging in the world. In Europe, vote buying had appeared in their elections in such embarrassing dimension at their initial period of political development. As explained by Grego (2015), the most famous episodes of vote buying came in 18th century England, when two or more rich aristocrats spent whatever money it took to win. The notorious "Spendthrift election" came in Northamptonshire in 1768, when three earls spent over £100,000 each to win a seat. Voters may be given money or other rewards for voting in a particular way, or not voting. Vote buying may also be done indirectly, through paying opinion molders, for example clergymen to tell their parishioners to vote for a particular party or candidate or some community leaders who are known to have made serious investments in the people to convince their followers to vote in a particular direction. In some jurisdictions, the offer or giving of other rewards which is referred to as "electoral treating" do occur (Parliamentary Electorates And Elections Act 1912 - Section 149). Electoral treating remains legal in some jurisdictions, such as in the Seneca Nation of Indians (Herbeck, 2011) but surely not in all situations. In Nigeria, such practice had been going

on with some political leaders taking responsibility of delivering a group of people to a particular party. That is a practice that is known in ‘Machine politics’ (see Nwanegbo, 2015).

This system of rigging in the elections falls under what we classified in this paper as ‘micro-level’ rigging.

Micro-level rigging is used to describe an aspect of rigging that presented localized practices of perverting the electoral process to produced skewed result from the electoral system. As in economics and the word ‘Micro’, denotes very small as in comparism with other of its kind. Such practices which are not easily seen as rigging but are indeed riggings are deviation from the norm and a perversion of the process and normal practices. They induce abnormal result. Especially here, it is characterized by the act of buying and selling of votes and the implication of such free spending of cash reflects on the outcome of election results even when the electorates indulging in it do not know the exact implication of their actions. In the final analysis, it looks at the implication of the economic state of the people (poverty situation) in the determination of and effectiveness of the use of free money in elections. Put differently, it implies the open buying of votes in the 2015 election and its impact on democratic elections in Anambra state. It connotes those acts by politicians of maximizing the vulnerability of a particular locality in perverting the process in such places for the advantages of the political parties. In 2015 general election, certain forms of these localized practices abound in many quarters and surely would have had considerable influence on the outcome of the election. When these localized practices operate within the common influence or can be captured under the general practices of rigging, we categorize them as such. Instances of such acts of rigging includes the much celebrated under-age voting in certain parts of Northern Nigeria (as shown by the electronic media during the election), the ballot box stuffing and result writing that appears glaring in some parts of the South-South region of the country (where at moment, there are contentions on the congruencies on the number of registered voters and the quantum of votes produced), some situations of multiple balloting in centers where card readers failed in almost every part of Nigeria, etc. Beyond these known situations, there where localized and peculiar cases of novel ballot buying in some parts of the South East, Anambra state specifically in such a manner that depicts a real situation of Micro level economic activities in the open market tainting the colour of election in some areas during the election.

Within the existing literature, the role of ethnicity, violence and intimidation, conventional riggings (ballot box stuffing, multiple balloting, outright result writing, etc), primordial and incumbency factors in the determination of voting choice and electoral victory as against governance performance in Nigeria is increasingly being recognized (see Nwanegbo and Alumona, 2010; Onwuzuligbo, et al (2015). However, little is known about outright open buying of votes in and around pooling stations in Nigeria. Variant of this is seen in the literature in what is called ‘chain voting’ system common with some Asian countries which is a very specific and

somewhat technical vote buying attack, listed on a par with voter assistance, a broad general category of attack (Jones, 2005).

This paper focuses on determining what gave rise to its emergence in this magnitude at this time that major improvements have been made in the electoral process in Nigeria. It also looks at its dimensions, magnitude and implication using the cases of Anambra West and Awka North Local Government Areas of Anambra state in the just concluded 2015 general elections.

## **Methodology**

This study drew data using multiple processes. First, from my observation of the two elections; the Presidential/National Assembly elections of March 28 and the State House of Assembly election of April 18, 2015 in two (2) wards (Umueze Anam Ward 1 & 2) in Anambra West Local Government of Anambra state, concentrating on the workings and activities of the political parties and their efforts at winning elections. Secondly, we conducted a tape-recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews between June 2 and 20, 2015 with purposively selected party agents of five (5) political parties (Accord Party, All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) that participated in the 2015 General Elections in Anambra state. We also selected six electorates each from five (5) Wards from Anambra West and Awka North Local Government Areas of Anambra State (constituting sixty (60) electorates and covering about (50%) of the study areas). Using the Snowballing method of sampling, we also selected and interviewed twenty (20) youth corpors that took part in those elections from the five (5) wards from each the two (2) Local Governments constituting our study area.

This study examined the role of Political Parties and their agents, the electorates, Electoral institutions that participated in the elections (INEC Adhoc Staff, Police, Civil Defence, Independent Observers) in encouraging or controlling open vote buying in the two Local Government Areas of Anambra State. The research equally randomly selected five (5) respondents from the metropolitan parts of Onitsha North and Awka South Local Government Areas (both urban areas in the Senatorial zones that the study areas are also situated) in Anambra to the find out the spate of occurrence of open vote buying in more advanced sections of the same Senatorial Zones and state. This was to enable us cross check our hypotheses.

The interview respondents were purposively selected based on two criteria: the relevance of a respondent's official position vis-a`-vis election conduct operations, and a respondent's reputation for being knowledgeable about the operation of Political Parties and elections in the areas. The data collected through interviews were complemented by primary and secondary data derived from documents, including published and unpublished literature, official documents and media reports.

## **The Emergence and Development of Micro-Level Rigging in Anambra State Elections**

From the body of literature of elections and electoral development in Nigeria, it is seen that elections in Nigeria came with the introduction of the elective principles by the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The intention which was to allow Nigerians 'limited' opportunity to participate through elections in the selection of the persons to occupy the few spaces allowed in Lagos and Calabar for the legislative representative seat (see Coleman, 1958 and even Ojiakor, 1981). Even though flagrant use of money to influence voting pattern might have existed at that early stage, it did not become manifest as the interest appeared to be one among Nigerians then; to pick people that would represent local interest in the colonial legislative house. Differing interest and conflicts emerged when in 1938 the group led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and another led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo sponsored different candidates (Chief Samuel Akinsanya an Egba man from Abeokuta and Chief Ernest Ikoli, an Ijaw man) to fill the vacant position that came out in the legislature following the resignation of K. O. Abayomi from the colonial Executive Council (Okoye, 1991). The bitterness it brought in led to the destruction of Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM), formation of NCNC and AG, and later, NPC, recreating political parties with stronghold along ethnic lines, heightened the conflict in the subsequent elections and gave rise to do or die principle in Nigeria elections (Nwanegbo, 1995). Even though politicians were judged by their constituents with criterion characterized by how much of wealth they were able to transfer to their homeland, it was more of ethnic cleavages developed and not clear cut prebendal politics (Nwanegbo, 1995).

The subsequent elections presented overt reliance on financial inducement to achieve electoral success. The 1983 particularly showed a heightened record of financial activities during the election (Adamolekun, 1985). NPN specifically embarked on distribution of grains, rice, salt, and groundnut oil as inducements to sway the supports of the dominant party 'NPP' and the UPN members too in the old Anambra state to vote for them. Even though much of physical cash was not used in the field, but the impact of money in the election was so glaring that it was repeatedly mentioned by the coup organizers of 1983 as one of the problems of Nigeria democracy that gave rise to the 1983 coup' d'état.

The highly celebrated 1993 elections in Nigeria were not spared by the spread of use of money in the election. Indeed, even as the civil society group and international community lauded it as the best and most credible election in Nigeria, some persons have cited excessive use of money to buy up the claimed victory of M.K.O. Abiola as one of the reasons for cancelling the election. Infact, starting even from the Jos convention, the use of money was celebrated. As was captured in the Tell Magazine (April 12, 1993: 5), in an essay captioned "Triumph of Money",

On the eve of the Jos and Portharcout conventions of the two parties, money walked all over the place on four sure legs. Planes loads of precious commodity were brought in and conscience were bought with it in brilliant counter-trades that dazed the

policemen and other security officers who were expected to erect a cordon sanitaire between money and the political delegates.

In the conduct of the election itself, Mohammed (2008: 107-108) declared that the conduct of the June 12, 1993 election did not make it the freest and fairest in Nigeria. In the first place, he explained;

It is well known that Abiola used money to ensure his victory. For inspite of the way the campaign had greatly favoured him, he was not the one to take any chance. People know that with regard to the bribing and corrupting of election officials and security personnel, the 1993 presidential election was worse than the 1979 presidential election...

This fourth republic has experienced more elections than the other experiments as it has obviously lasted more than others. Following that, it has had different experiences too and some have shown more use of money than the others. 1999 election for instance was a bit milder than the others in terms of vote buying. In 2003, more money was spent to pervert the processes from above. Hence, even when much money was spent, it did not and was not intended to sway the individual votes. Much of them went into aiding the parties in running their conventional rigging of the elections. Same too was the experience of the 2007 general elections.

Different and more heightened pedestrian spending was recorded in the localized Anambra state election of 2010. There, APGA deployed more cash to attract a large number of the very apathetic electorates to the polling stations on the Election Day. Convinced that he has done relatively good enough to get people's support but afraid that the people's attitude of not coming out to cast vote in elections may give PDP machineries opportunity to manipulate the process, Peter Obi's administration deployed large sums of money to every community (through the town unions) to attract people out to vote and protect the vote and get paid (interview June ----, 2015). Indeed, it worked as good number of persons, under the guides of the town union President Generals came and stayed and was paid.

During the 2014 governorship election in Anambra, the state government advanced the styles. First, the government came up with the policy of planning pensions of N5000 per month for the elderly members of the state. Operating this policy technically (or intentionally) took a little longer time, about six month and ended with six months arrears of N30, 000 that was paid a day to the election with a promise of enjoying that every month if they could turn out en-mass to vote the APGA governorship candidate. That also worked as both the elders and their children having the hope of relief from the responsibility of seeing for the upkeep of their aged parents and relatives turned out to vote with promise of and actual receiving of some money for their inconveniencies (interview June ----, 2015).

From that 2014 election with APGA recording the second straight winning freely using money before and at the point of voting, the stage was set for giving and collection of money as the

motivation and conviction for voting a particular candidate and political party. The reason for the event of the 2015 general election becomes clear in the face of the situations reported earlier. Indeed, 2015 election presented a picture of democracy of the ‘black market’ as almost every political party and candidate that prepared for the election prepared for and made available reasonable sum of money at every polling station for paying and buying votes from the poor electorates.

### **Dimensions and Magnitude of Micro-Level Rigging in Anambra State**

Two approaches were dominantly used to buy vote in the 2015 general elections in Anambra state. The first was the buying and stockpiling of the Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) before the conclusion to use the ‘card readers’ for the election. This act which was not peculiar to Anambra state was acknowledged by INEC official when some electoral material were intercepted by the military men at Ado-Ekiti, even though the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner of Ekiti state excused it as wasted material by (see Sun, June 13, 2014). When eventually the card readers failed (or were sabotaged) in some communities, it became easy for the party agents with the active connivance of the INEC ad-hoc staff to use both paid/party loyalists to use those cards to do multiple voting (Interview June, 2015).

Still under the same or similar process, some persons had their cards collected on the Election Day used and returned to them after. As reported by some of the people interviewed, the various party agents had cash and being aware of the practice; they came to the polling stations and were approached with offers by the various party agents. The voters would decide whose offer to accept depending on the amount of money being offered. He gives out his voter’s permanent voters card, someone else uses it to vote and returns the card to him for another paid voting day. This was necessary when they owner of the card was not very well trusted to deliver inside a closed voting cubicle (interview June, 2015).

The second dimension is the buying of people’s vote at the polling station. That was made very popular by the fact that all the parties were involved in it in different capacities and according to their stakes. For the people paid to be trusted to vote by themselves, sometime, the agents stay very close to the voting points with the active connivance of the ad-hoc staff and security personnel at the polling stations. That in an opinion of one party agents was to ensure that the money paid was not a waste (interview June, 2015).

It was found that the party/candidates’ agents had the money, with knowledge of the practice; people would come to them, present their voters card to ascertain their value in the election. With such successful accreditation, the electorate goes to vote under a close watch of the agents who are not disturbed by the security personnel and INEC ad-hoc staff. On confirming that the electorate voted the candidate, he is given his already determined amount. The amount paid per

vote ranged between N1000 to N5000 to buy the cards and votes of the electorates. This depended on the stake of the party and candidate in a particular election (interview June, 2015).

It was equally found that in few instances, there were overt conflicts which came when one party feels that the other was buying it out. In such occasion though, the voter decides which agent and party to go with. Also, on inquiry, the research found out that some few elites actually voted without collecting money and therefore not monitored, however, they were really quite a few persons in this category.

The research also revealed that the security personnel did not constitute problems to the activities as the party with comparative advantage usually settles the security personnel. However, in such few occasions where some agents become persistent in protest, the security personnel merely insisted that people stay away from the polling station by the designated meters according to the electoral rules. Individuals on their own would come on their own to vote but may not be closely monitored again. That still does not stop the money paying activities as people on their own still go for it. The respondents explained that such money collection practice provides them with the opportunity to get money from the politicians, who they usually never see again until the next election time (interview June, 2015).

On the possibilities of stopping that practice of vote buying, a good number the electorates said they would prefer to keep their vote if they are not paid for it (interview, June, 2015), as they actually do not believe that the person being voted for can really affect them positively after being voted in. This is an indication of the level of distrust between the people and their elected representatives.

The interviews clearly indicated that the practice was widespread, accepted by the electorates, and supported extensively by compromised ad-hoc staff and security personnel. However, it also shows that reasonable resistance by any party agent, operating in a not over-whelming disadvantaged position (as that may equally be trashed by the majority, even violently), had the capacity and do reduce the practice. However, though, almost all the parties engage in it whenever they find it convenient and when they have a high stake in an election.

### **Micro-Level Rigging of Anambra State Election: Implications for Democratic Governance**

The growing practice of vote buying in Nigeria elections has very deep implications in the effort at strengthening the country's democracy.

First, it has the tendency to create great distortion on the basic principles guiding the links between governance, performance and certainty of support in the subsequent election, which is one of the basic values of market democracy. In the market democracy, there is a very established link between performances, promise of performance i.e. items to the market and the

electorate's consenting to the products through their votes. This which maintains the culture of uncertainty makes democratic elections very powerful instruments in the hands of the electorates with which they control their state and government. Under this situation of black market transaction, the sanctity of the votes is defiled even as the value of vote increases. Same condition that is achieved with patrimonial (godfather) politics and 'machine politics' is achieved with this practice.

Second, it impinges on the spate of maturity of the electoral process in the country. Considering the connection between the electoral process and stabilization of the credible processes of electing representative, it is known that the development of the process thrives in the practice. Hence, evolving this act of perversion slows down the maturity level of good processes and therefore reduced its pace of maturing.

Third, the practice introduces and sustains a very poor electoral culture in the society. As it can be seen, the practice of people putting their votes and choice to sale came from the negative socialization which is routed in very poor political culture. The ills in politics deepens under this practice as it indemnifies the position that anything is good for as long as it can be and has been paid for.

Fourth, it has the capacity to slow down the commitment of government to the people. Having bought and knowing that the position is open at anytime for the highest bidder on the field, it becomes not very fashionable to drive good governance as the people are vulnerable and would always sacrifice their capacity for voice at the altar of price. The greatest loser in this circumstance is developmental governance.

### **Measures for Reducing Vote Buying**

Looking at the discussions, the fertile ground for buying and selling of vote was laid by poverty. Therefore, solving the problem would have to begin with reducing the poverty level in the country. Indeed the two Local Governments that this study concentrated on are arguably the two of the poorest Local Governments in the state. This may not be a very easy thing as the political class counts on the poverty situation of people while planning their strategies for winning elections and controlling the political and economic situation of the people.

The second measure to design mass education to attack that act specifically. The masses, especially those poor populations that are paid to do the voting do not fully appreciate the consequences of their actions. Properly educating them on that exposes the implication and reduces the indulgence in that. As has been seen in the 2015 election, education can really achieve good result and the civil society organizations would good vectors for carrying the message and it would be received.

Third measure is to improve on the security with definite charge on stopping that act. Indeed, the security operatives might be feeling that it concerns the people, providing for it in their mandate

would make a little impact especially if the people are already educated on its negative implications to them.

Four and very importantly is designing a process that would reduce the interface between the people and the party agents in the field. This might also be a difficult one but this current process that throws people into the polling stations in a crowd is exposes the electorate to the danger of personal pressure. INEC have to think towards how to achieve this. It is achievable and is seen in many developed democracies, even with high percentage of their population voting.

With these processes and activities, we hope that the menace of vote buying would be reduced to the barest minimal and our elections start reflecting the result of genuine convictions. That can improve both responsibility and governance in the country.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explains how the nature of the reform in the electoral process impacts on the value of votes and the consciousness about that value the peoples' potentials contributed to and conditioned the practices in the 2015 general elections. It identifies that guided by the people's thinking from the survivalist point of view, and the need to provide for the stomach infrastructure, they saw the election period as yet another opportunity to make money and get the system to fend for them. Again too, they saw the elections as the only opportunity of getting from the elites, in advance what they need from them as they do not hope to drive any value from them again in the usual practice of Nigerian politicians until the next election.

The paper traced the developments, dimensions and implication of this act of black market vote buying on democratic elections in Anambra state and indeed, Nigeria and provided the suggestions on the measure for curbing the menace and for making elections to really become insulated from direct cash influence in such degrading manner.

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