Technology and Electoral Administration in Nigeria: A Study of 2015 General Elections

By

1Ekanem A. Ekanem Ph.D & 2Okafor Celestine O.

Abstract
This paper explores the dynamic of technology as it impacts on Nigeria’s electoral administration. Secondary sources (books, journal articles, internet materials, monographs, dailies among others) were extensively used. The data obtained from the sources were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. The paper relied on the Communication theory of Karl Deutsch, as its framework of analysis. Findings revealed that electoral malpractice and electoral violence, led to the adoption of technology in 2015 general elections administration in Nigeria. It further revealed that technology has contributed to the accuracy, credibility, security and above all, reduction in electoral litigation. In order to deepen and mainstream technology in Nigeria’s electoral administration, the paper, therefore, recommends amendment of Electoral Act 2010, staff training and development as well as a change of attitude among Nigerian politicians.

Keywords: Democracy, Elections, Electoral Administration, Electoral Process, Technology

Introduction

It should be recalled that the general elections that ushered in the present democratic dispensation was conducted by the military, under the leadership of General Abubakar (rtd) in 1999. The elections were accepted by all the political parties; Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples’ Party (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), among others that participated in the general elections. The elections were devoid of malpractices (especially rigging) and attendant violence that associate with it. It should be recalled that, since 1999, the then ruling party, Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) captured more states than any other party, until 2015 general elections which its performance was poor. International Crisis Group (2007) posited that in 2007 Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) flag bearer polled 62.8 percent of vote cast, while Chief Olu Falae of Alliance for Democracy (AD) struggled to get 37.2 percent. In 2003, the PDP won 61.9 percent of the total vote cast while ANPP scored 32.2 percent. The remaining 5.9 percent was shared to other parties. Again, in 2007 general elections, PDP got 70 percent, leaving ANPP with 18 percent while the remaining 12 percent was left to the smaller parties. In the same vein, states under PDP control had increased from 21 in 1999 to 27 in 2003, and further increased to 28 in 2007 (International Crisis Group, 2011). The general impression was that PDP performed excellently well. However, the reality was that Nigeria’s electoral process was associated with flaws that permitted riggings and violence hence provided opportunity for the ruling party to manipulate their ways. For instance, immediately after the 2007 general elections, Ken Nnamni, the former Senate President lamented that, “there will be legacy of hatred, people will hate the new administration and they will have a crisis of legitimacy” (as cited in International Crisis Group, 2007, p.5). Adewale Balogun, the Executive Director of Center for...
Constitutional Governance warned that, “if Yar’Adua allows himself to be sworn in, based on that fraud called an election, he will not enjoy our cooperation, and we will ensure that he does not enjoy his reign” (as cited in Ashy, 2007, p.4).

Late President Yar’Adua who benefited from the fraud, admitted that the process that brought him into power was flawed, hence required immediate reforms. In line with his promises, he appointed Justice Mohammed Uwais (rtd) to head 22 member Electoral Reform Committee. The Committee did a good work and submitted its report to the Federal Government. Regrettably, President Yar’Adua died before the report was implemented. Former President Jonathan who succeeded Late President Yar’Adua used the Electoral Reform Committee’s report as a yard stick of administering the 2011 electoral process in Nigeria. Though the report suggested that the appointment of the Chairman of Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) be done by the National Judicial Council, former President Jonathan went ahead, and appointed Professor Attahiru Jega as the Chairman. Professor Jega, the INEC Chairman was able to live up to expectation of Nigerians. The first assignment that he embarked upon was the production of authentic voters register. International Crisis Group (2011) commented that, “most Nigerian analysts, however, considered that public confidence in the old register was so low and it was politically impossible for Jega to use it. Politicians and voters a like saw it as the first major test of the new INEC” (p.15).In order to restore confidence in the electorates the INEC Chairman, Jega introduced biometric technology. The biometric technology contains information about the electorates, including fingerprint; which must be captured in a machine. The essence was to replace the old voters register with a Direct Data Capture Machine (DDCM). According to Kuris (2012), completing a new voter register was one of the pillar project that assist in building confidence among Nigeria’s electorates.

“The Electoral Commission has to overcome its poor reputation by demonstrating integrity and competence. It had to convince the public that it was using its financial independence and enlarged budget responsibly, transparently and cost-effectively” (Kuris, 2012, p.4).

However, after completing the registration, INEC embarked on production of Permanent Voter’s Card (PVC). The PVCs were distributed along side with a continuous registration exercise that took place in three phases. The first phase started on 23rd May and ended on 25th May 2014. States under the first schedule were: Taraba, Gombe, Zamfara, Kebbi, Benue, Kogi, Abia, Enugu, Akwa Ibom, and Bayelsa. The second phase that took place on 18th July and ended on 20th July, 2014, comprised Yobe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Sokoto, Federal Capital Territory, Kwarra, Anamba, Ebonyi, Ondo, Oyo, Delta and Cross River. The third phase consisted states such as; Adamawa, Borno, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Nassarawa, Niger, Imo, Lagos, Ogun, Edo, and Rivers. The collection centers were the wards where the biometric information was captured. Again, the PVCs contain voters’ biometric information which was embedded in microchip, which later replaced the Temporary Voter’s Card (TVC) that was used in the 2011 general elections. According to Moruf (2015), “as at 7th January 2015, the statistics on the distribution of PVCs shows the total number of the PVC received to be 54,341,610, while the total number of PVC distributed was 34,774,391. This implies that the percentage of PVC distributed was 71.35%. a total of 15,567,219 PVCs, were yet to be distributed as at then” (p.21).

The distribution of the PVC to different states of the federation generated another area of controversy. Indeed, there were claims and counter claims as well as accusations from the major two political parties. The PDP accused the Electoral Management Body (INEC) of favoring the opposition party during the distribution;
INEC was also accused of removing 1.4 million names from the 2011 voters register in Lagos State (Ezegwu, 2015). In his response, the Chief Press Secretary to INEC, Kayode Idowu (2015), refuted the allegations but maintained that, “when data were subjected to the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) software, 82,892 multiple registrations were eliminated. In addition… there was loss of data and incomplete data affecting about one million records… in 1,792 polling units that were identified and made public before the exercise” (as cited in Moruf, 2015, p.22).

In addition, before the general elections that took place on 28th March, 2015 the INEC declared on 25th February 2015 that it has distributed 54,377,747 (fifty-four million three hundred and seventy-seven thousand, seven hundred and forty-seven) PVCs nationwide. This figure represented 78.93 percent of the total number of voters registered by INEC (Hassan, 2015). On the general elections day, Smart Card Readers (SCR) were distributed to all polling units in the country. The SCR has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2 GHz and an Android 4.2.2 Operating System. In his words, Hedlund (2015), explained that, “the…aim of introducing the new technology is to guarantee better voter identification system, faster voting, faster… counting and submission of results and improved accountability and transparency of the entire electoral process” (p.13).

In the same vein, Jega (2015), praised card reader machine, and maintained that “…after configuration, the card readers can read PVCs issued by INEC alone…it reads the embedded microchip in the card, in addition, it allows identification of the identity of the voters by matching the voters fingerprints with the one stored on the chip…” (as cited in Moruf, 2015, pp.24-25).

Fundamental questions that need immediate answers are:

(i) Which theory can adequately explained technology and electoral administration in Nigeria: a study of 2015 general elections?
(ii) What rationale led to the adoption of technology in 2015 general elections administration in Nigeria?
(iii) What were the major challenges of technological application in Nigeria’s electoral administration?
(iv) What were the major contributions of technology to 2015 general elections administration in Nigeria?

The first section of the paper deals with introduction, while the second section is the clarifications of major concepts. The third section is the theoretical framework and it is followed by the fourth section that deals with the rationale for the adoption of technology in 2015 general elections administration. The fifth section is the challenges of adopting technology in Nigeria’s electoral administration while the sixth section contains the contributions of technology to 2015 general elections administration in Nigeria. The last section of the paper contains conclusion, recommendations and references.

Conceptualizing Technology and Electoral Administration

According to Catt, Ellis, Maley, Wall, and Wolf (2007), the term technology is the science of craft. Etymologically, the term technology is derived from two Greek words ‘Technne and Logia’. Technne means art, skill, and cunning of hand. And ‘Logia’ means the collection of techniques, skills, methods and processes used in production of goods or services or in the accomplishment of objectives, such as scientific investigation. Therefore, technology is said to be the knowledge of techniques, processes among others. It can be embedded in machines, computers, devices and factories.
which individuals operate without detailed knowledge of the workings of such things. Ramey (2013), defined technology as an application of scientific knowledge, devoted to creating tools, processing actions and extraction of materials. Ramey further observed that technology is wide and everyone has his or her way of understanding the meaning of the term technology. Technology is used to accomplish various tasks in our daily lives, in brief; we can describe technology as products, processes or organizations. Ramey (2013) also argued that technology is an application of science to solve a problem. In Ramey’s opinion, technology and science are two different subjects which work hand-in-hand to accomplish a specific task or solve a particular problem.

Technology can also be defined as the entities, both material and immaterial, created through the application of mental and physical efforts in order to achieve some values. In this usage, technology can be referred to tools and machines that may be used to solve real-world problem. The concept technology can equally be used to refer to the collection of techniques. It is the current state of human’s knowledge of how to combine resources to produce desired products, to solve problems, fulfill needs or satisfied wants. It includes technical methods, skills, processes, techniques, tools and raw materials (Ahmed, John, Abdullah & Arshad 2015). Again, technology is applied to almost everything in live. Technology is used at work to extract materials, for communication, transportation, learning, manufacturing, creating artifacts, sourcing data, scaling business and so on. Technology is part of human knowledge which involves tools, materials and systems. The application of technology results in artifacts or products (Ramey, 2013). The use of technology began with the conversion of natural resources into simple tools. Technology can be used in all aspects of electoral process. These include: voter, party and candidate support signatures; ballot production, electoral logistics, voter identification, voting in polling stations, vote counting, result transmission and presentation of preliminary and final results of data can all be performed by electronic and digital equipment (Catt, Ellis, Maley, Wall and Wolf, 2007)

If technology is well applied, it can benefit humans, but if it is wrongly applied, it can cause harm to human beings.

Furthermore, the term electoral administration consist both the structure and the process of managing election. Jinadu (1997) defined electoral administration as, “the organization and conduct of elections to elective (political) public office by an electoral body”(p. 21). The manner of conducting election could be described as the process while the body that conducts the election is the structure. Moveh (2015) explained further that, “by structure, is meant the bureaucracy that is set up or established to organize and conduct election….” (p.15). Here in Nigeria, the first electoral body that conducted election in 1959 was Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN). The ECN was established by the colonial master (Britain) in 1960 to conduct both regional and federal elections. The government of late Tafawa Balewa established Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) that conducted general elections in 1964 and 1965. General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd) also established Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in 1978. It assisted in conducting 1979 and 1983 general elections. Ejumudo (2013) also added that General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd) established National Electoral Commission (NEC) in 1987 which conducted 1993 general elections. Late General Sani Abacha established National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) in 1995 which conducted series of elections before the present Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established by General Abdulsalami Abubakar (rtd) in August 1998. It is worthy to note that a change in military regime in Nigeria led to abolition and subsequent establishment of
new electoral body. “Despite the change in nomenclature as far as the members of electoral bodies are concerned, their rules are fundamentally the same” (Ejumudo, 2013 p.163). It is their mandate to conduct free and fair election for Nigeria.

Similarly, the structure of electoral administration does not only confine to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) but also extends to security agencies (pp. 9-10) Security agencies (Police, Civil Defence Organization and Military), as well as the judiciary are part of electoral administration. Election administration entails the management and organization of all stages of electoral process. Moruf (2015) explained further, that election administration can be classified into three stages, which are; pre-election, election and post-election activities. The pre-election activity which is the first phase involves delimitation of constituencies, registration of political parties, and eligible voters. It also includes screening and verification of candidates for election. The second stage; (that is election proper) involves activities like voting by eligible and registered voters, counting of votes, collation and announcement of final results as well as the declaration of result. The post election activities constitute the third stage, and it involves attending to election complaints and litigations by aggrieved candidates and parties (Ajayi, 2007). Indeed, it requires facilitation of voting process as well as implementation of electoral act and policies. Moruf (2015) also maintained that, “election administration at the local level includes running election on election day and post election activities; such as maintaining voter registration lists, drawing precincts, selecting polling place site, procuring equipment, recruiting and training poll workers, evaluating and implementing improvements to the electoral process itself” (p.5).

The next aspect of electoral administration is the electoral processes. Jinadu (1997) described electoral process as the rules, procedure and activities relating to: the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of their members, selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voters’ education, registration of political parties, registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting, counting of the ballots, declaration of results and in some cases supervision of party nomination congresses.

It is also important to note that, a good election administration must aim at improving electoral process. The process comprises the rules, procedures and activities that relate to the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of their members, the registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting, counting of ballots, declaration of result, the selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voters education and in some cases, registration of political parties and supervision of party nomination congresses (Ebirim, 2013).

Akamere (2001), as cited in Nwanegbo (2015), defined electoral process as all the activities and procedures involve in the election of representatives by electorates. Jinadu (1997), as also cited in Nwanegbo (2015), contended that electoral process entails all the pre-election and post-election activities without which an election is unfeasible. Nwanegbo (2015), further stated that:

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(pp. 4-5).
Similarly, Nwabueze (1993) as cited in Tsuwa (2014), posted that, the electoral process embraces within it all the institutional procedures, arrangements and actions involved in elections. Tsuwa (2014) also argued that the electoral process involves issues like suffrage, registration of voters, delimitation of constituencies, the right to contest elections, the electoral competition between rival political parties, bodies charge with conduct and supervision of election, the method of voting, the actual conduct of election, the determination of results, trials and determination of electoral malpractices and their consequences. Added to this, Chukwu (2007) as cited in Tsuwa (2014), opined that electoral process includes election observation and verification activities carried out by local and international bodies or both. It also involves the establishment of institutions and structures that will mobilize the populace towards involvement in an election.

Thus, electoral process covers the totality of activities that guarantee fair process that is needed for the conduct of election. Nwanegbo and Alumona (2011), maintained that, electoral process is normally guided by different principles or systems that are meant to ensure that the electorates express their political preferences accordingly. Indeed, in developed democracies (United States, Britain, France etc), the process is characterized by strict adherence to the rules and regulations as stipulated in their constitutions and electoral acts. The process guarantees peace and stability in political environment. However, in many emerging democracies (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe etc), the process has always posed serious problems for democratic sustenance, because it is characterized by outright disregard to the rules and regulations of the states.

**Theoretical Framework: Communication Theory**

The theory of Communication which was propounded by Karl Deutsch was derived from Nobert Wiener’s theory of cybernetics. North (1963) as cited in Isaak (1985) defined the term, “cybernetics as the study of communication and control in all types of organizations from machines to large-scale organizations” (p. 291). It is an attempt to apply the knowledge derived from self-monitoring device such as; anti-aircraft guns, thermostats and electronic computers to analogous social system. Communication theory in Political Science can, therefore, be seen as an application of the general approach of cybernetics theory to the study of political institutions (Isaak, 1985, p. 291). Contrary to the general opinion that politics is all about power, Ray (2009) posited that, “the essential function of government and politics is to receive and process the messages or information, decode on what action is to be taken and then steer and coordinate human efforts towards the attainment of selected goals” (p. 13).

This view supports Deutsch (1965), opinion that power is neither the center nor the essence of politics. “The essence of politics is the dependable coordination of human efforts for the attainment of the social goals” (Ray, 2009, p. 16). Deutsch explained further that, it is through communication that input and output are generated and acted upon by the system. In fact, the effectiveness of the political system does not depend on power, but on how well it handles the demands from its environment, especially its ability to accurately analyzes messages from the environment and transmits same to the people. Deutsch (1965), summed it all, by saying that “Politics could not exist without communication nor war be fought. Modern nation states may be viewed essentially as a decision and control system which relies upon the exchange of messages in both its domestics affairs and foreign relations” (as cited in Isaak, 1985, p. 290).

Added to this, Deutsch identified the basic assumptions of Communication theory to include; feedback, load, lag, gain and lead. According to Johari (2011) feedback refers to the communication network that produces...
action, in response to an input of information. The feedback may either be positive or negative. Positive feedback refers to a situation that the information that comes into the system improves its output. Negative feedback on the other hand is information from the public that do not improve, rather alter the attainment of goal. The load refers to the quantities of information that the system receives from the public. Lag is the delay in reacting to the information received from the public. Indeed, it is also concerned with the time between reception of information and the reaction to it. Similarly, gain is the amount of change that the system makes as a result of the load. It includes the extensive response and the effectiveness of the system to the information received from the public. Again, the concept of lead refers to the ability of the system to forecast the future consequences (Varma, 20011). Lead also involves its capacity to act in response to forecast of future consequences.

In terms of application, it is worthy to note that INEC adopted Information and Communication Technology (ICT); especially the biometric machine for registration, Smart Card Reader (SCR) as well as Permanent Voters Card (PVC) for voting mainly because of public outcry on the malpractices and violence that associated with the former manual method. This technology improved the performance of the INEC more than the former. This information from the public could be seen as load while INEC, response is the feedback (which is the introduction of technological appliance) to the electoral process. Again, the concept of lag also featured immensely during the period of presidential election on 28th March, 2015. Some of the machines were not functioning properly and the INEC staffs were not able to do the needful, rather resulted to the old method, through the use of incidence forms. However, the system was able to gain, in view of the fact that INEC performance in 2015 general elections was highly commended by both local and international community. This success will help the INEC to prepare better for the 2019 general elections, thereby leading the paper to the concept of lead. The hope is that the Nigeria’s electoral process would be highly improved by 2019, and Nigeria would be rated high among the comity of nations.

Rationale for the Adoption of Technology in the Electoral Administration

Nigeria’s elections have been characterized by malpractices. International Crisis Group (2007) maintained that malpractices in Nigeria’s elections include; intimidation of voters and in some cases election observers and monitors, hoarding of election materials by INEC officials including ballots and result sheets, ballot-box stuffing by dominant political parties, often with the connivance of INEC and security officials, theft of ballot boxes and ballot papers, announcement of result, where there was no voting, (especially in the South East, South South and North East) diversion of ballots and result sheets so that powerful politicians could falsify results including refusal to give certain polling stations adequate voting materials among others. Again hijacking of electoral materials including ballot boxes has been a common practice among Nigerian politicians. The electoral process lacked transparency, as vote counting was done in secrete and result never displayed for the public to see. International Crisis Group (2007) posted that, “arrangements for conveying polling materials and officials to and from the polling stations to the counting centers were inadequate…arrangement often led to compromises or abuses that cleared the way for massive falsification…Parties with more resources on the ground out-rigged the others…”(p.3).

For instance, the 2003 general elections had a lot to be remembered. Eguavon (2009) recalled that some results were written in the private homes of individuals and in some cases announced even before the elections were concluded. In the same vein, fictitious thumb-printed ballot papers were used to compute figures for pre determined winners. Agbu (2015) extended further that, “security
agents were used by government to intimidate and harass the electorates in different parts of the country. Money was used to influence the electorates to vote for unpopular candidates” (p.4). Even the European Union Electoral Observation Monitored Team, led by Marx Vanden Berg identified 12 states (Abia, AkwaIbom, Cross River, Ebonyi, Benue, Imo, Enugu, Bayelsa, Kogi, Anambra, Adamawa and Rivers) where frauds and irregularities were rampant and concluded that the “maximum standard for democratic elections were not met” (as cited in Agbu, 2015, p.4). Similarly, the 2007 general elections could be described as worst in Nigerian political history. The elections were characterized by series of challenges and shortcomings due to poor preparations and widespread manipulations of the electoral process by the government. Law enforcement agencies especially Police and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were freely used to intimidate and suppress opponents. Transition Monitoring Group (2007), as cited in Agbu (2015), posited that:

the irregularities characterizing this elections (2007) included, the late arrival of materials and officials, stealing of ballot papers, vote buying, harassment, chanting, shooting and taunting of voters, lack of secrecy of voting, police interference, ballot snatching and stuffing, intimidation and political violence, denied access to polling stations, partiality of electoral officials and police, improper voting procedures and late commencement of elections and underage voting (p.4).

However, after analyzing the entire 2007 general elections in Nigeria, the Democratic Election Observation Group identified numerous lapses that led to massive irregularities and electoral malpractices, hence concluded that, “the whole election was a charade and did not meet the minimum standards required for democratic elections’ (TMG, 2007, as cited in Agbu, 2015, p.4). Again, the reasons for these irregularities are simple. The traditional means of processing result has been outdated. The traditional means that involves physical movement of people and electoral materials from one polling unit and collation center has been a thing of the past due to the risk that involved in it. Jega and Hiller (2012) maintained that:

Communicating election results through traditional means of transportation, expose the results to numerous risks such as attacks by political thugs, aggrieved party members: or manipulation by the corrupt motivated officials. These constraining factors negatively affect the performance of the traditional paper ballot system and puts to question, credibility of continual adoption. It also open- up a window for e-voting option (p.3).

Similarly, Abu-Shanab, Knight and Refai (2010) confirmed that e-voting improves the convenience, efficiency and effectiveness of the electoral process, reduces cost of organizing election, increases participation and provides alternative option as it improves integrity of election process in general (as cited in Ahmed, John, Abdullah &Arshad, 2015). By extension, though it is arguably that technology generally has not eliminated electoral fraud completely but the point is that it discourages blatant fraud that characterized previous elections. According to Kuris (2011), “it made it more difficult for rigging to happen. Voters used their mobile phones to snap pictures and video evidence of electoral fraud”(p.120).

Indeed, even before Attahiru Jega, Abel Guobadia, the former National Independent Electoral Commission’s Chairman had introduced Electronic Voters Register (EVR) in 2002. Guobadia also established Zonal
Processing Centre (ZPC) for the Electronic Voters Register (EVR) as well as implemented virtual Private Network Security System (PNSS) nationwide. Surprisingly, the technology did not reflect in 2003 general elections, in view of the fact that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the then President was not interested in “free and fair” election. Regrettably, Nwatu (2004) supported the rejection, by saying that, “electoral process is seen as human-oriented and human-based activities which finds fulfillment in democratic values...in terms of contrast, electrical engineering cannot be correctly described in the same vein” (as cited in Idike, 2014, p.138).

Even Maurice Iwu, the then Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (2005) commented that; “before adopting any form of electronic voting method, a critical appraisal of such method must be undertaken” (as cited in Idike, 2014, p.138). In other words, Iwu encouraged fraud and violence in Nigeria’s electoral process. It is on this note that, Jega worth to be celebrated, for taking a bold step in correcting the flaws in the Nigeria’s electoral process. Kuris (2012) hinted that technology assists electoral Commission to communicate directly with the electorates, using social media and mobile phones. These technologies also help INEC to be closer to the citizens, thereby turning them into watch dogs against fraud. In his commendation, Rogbe Adeoya (2015), President of Information Technology System and Security Professionals (ITSSP) said that, “card reader technology was able to reduce election fraud by providing accurate records of accredited voters who were the same people that were allowed to vote.” (as cited in Ahmed, et al 2015, p.120). Indeed, the Card Reader was able to address the issue of discrepancies between actual voters and fake voters. Similarly, Shehu Gusau, the former Chairman of the House Committee on ICT, posited that, “although the card reader technology is new to Nigeria, it has helped to achieve free and fair elections, without massive rigging” (Onapajo, 2014 as cited in Ahmed etal, 2015, p.120).

Arguably, elections in African states generally are characterized by uncertainties, as a result of fear of election-related violence. According to Atuobi (2013), election-related violence can take place in various stages of electoral process. It could occur, before, during or after elections. Burchard (2015) explained further that, it encompasses any intimidation or harassing action that is directly related to the electoral process. It may take place, prior to the election, on election day, or immediately after election has taken place, often as a result of the announcement of the outcome. By extension, electoral violence includes series of behaviours that ranges from the distribution of hate-speech leaflets, the forced displacement of specific group of voters, political assassinations, and targeted violent attacks. In the same vein, it encompasses protests and riots that occur as a result of elections (Burchard, 2015). Beone (2013) as cited in Burchard (2015) also maintained that, electoral violence occur as a product of protest around electoral events, either before or after an election. It often takes place when tension is heightened between two opposing groups who are in close proximity with each other. Again, it can be triggered by perception (real or imagined) of electoral impropriety.

Added to this, it is worthy to note that, leaders especially in Nigeria are not helping to curb electoral violence. It should be recalled that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of Nigeria made an unguided statement prior to the 2007 general elections that, “for him and the PDP, the 2007 general elections was “a do or die” affair” (Omotola, 2007 as cited in Omotola 2009, p.62). In other words, the then President was instigating and promoting electoral violence. Cases are many in Nigeria to prove that electoral violence was part of its electoral process. Human Rights Watch (2007), maintained that there were incidences of pre-electoral violence in the run-up to Nigeria’s April 2007 general elections. The general elections witnessed political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political
factions. In Akwa Ibom State, Daniel Akpan, a commercial motorcyclist and Nsema Ekong, a bus driver, lost their lives following deadly clashes that erupted in Uyo, between the PDP and ANPP supporters on 22nd March, 2011 (Adesote & Abimbola, 2014). International Crisis Group (2014) further maintained that on 13th March 2014, a local PDP leader in Akwa Ibom State, Albert Ukpanah was strangled to death in Abak. Similarly, Eshiet Inwang, a native of Eket in Akwaibom State, and PDP local leader was shot to death on 7th May, 2014. Due to high rate of politically motivated killings in Akwaibom State, a former gubernatorial candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Umana Okon Umana petitioned the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to investigate the former Governor of Akwaibom State, Chief Godswill Akpabio, alleging that he was responsible for those deaths. Again, Adesote and Abimbola (2014) recalled the post-electoral violence that occurred in the northern states of Bauchi, Yobe, Borno and Kaduna in 2011 immediately after the former President Jonathan was declared winner in a presidential election that he contested with General Buhari (rtd). Lives and property were lost, as a result of that election. The federal government responded by setting up 22 man panel of investigation under the Chairmanship of Sheikh Ahmed Lemu to investigate, the immediate and the remote causes of the violence, as well as recommending ways of averting future occurrence.

Furthermore, it was as a result of these blood-letting that civil society groups such as Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Labour Election Monitoring Group (LEMG), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Civil Liberty Organizations (CLO), Alliance for Credible Election (ACE), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) as well as Enough Is Enough (EIE) collectively demanded that modern technology should be applied in the Nigeria’s electoral process. However, Nigerian government has yielded to this call, by introducing various Information Communication and Technology (ICT) platforms, such as facebook, twitter, youtube, instagram and among others for the purpose of deepening its electoral process. According to Winifred Oyo-Ita (2015) the then Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, stakeholders in several other democracies have since harnessed the utility of ICTs platforms in their electoral process, and Nigeria, despite structural challenges, is not exempted. The social media was first used in a remarkable way, in the 2011 elections by politicians, who used facebook account to garner country-wide support. The 2015 general elections witnessed an increase in the use of ICTs platforms for election-related activity by stakeholders (as cited in Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 2015, p.3).

Social media played important role, before, during and after the general elections in 2015. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) partnered effectively with security agencies. They were able to exchange information that they received from the public, through social media. For instance, in Oyo State violence nearly erupted as a result of a rumorthat the incumbent Governor, Ajimobi wanted to rig election. Kuris (2012) reported that local voters tweeted and emailed reports of the incidents and photographs of the partial results sheets posted outside polling places. The information from the social media assisted the INEC to alert the military who responded quickly to avert the crisis. Social media also assisted INEC to monitor elections and save lives of the voters. Odero (2011) as cited in Kuris (2012), maintained that INEC and civil society organizations used online engagement to publicize and normalize hotlines established by security forces. These hotlines assisted in rescuing 34
people who were kidnapped in various locations in the South-South region of Nigeria during the 2015 general elections.

The hotlines also prevented outbreak of violence in some areas that were designated hotspots. Those who threatened the security of the state were called to order. For instance, in December 2013, the Department of State Security (DSS) invited Junaid Mohammed, a Chieftain of APC who warned that there will be violence in the Northern Nigeria, if the former President, Jonathan insisted on contesting 2015 general elections. Nasir El-Rufai, was also invited by the Department of State Security (DSS) following his comment on the social media that there will be violence in Nigeria, if INEC refused to conduct free and fair elections in 2015. Comments from the public through various ICT platforms like facebook, twitter, email prompted the security agencies to act fast and prevent the ugly situation (International Crisis Group; 2015).

Challenges of Technological Application in Nigeria’s Electoral Administration

Makama and Muhammed (2015), pointed out that the level of awareness among the electorates about the card reader was poor. A large number of Nigerians especially the electorates in rural communities were completely unaware of the device. Many of these people have never seen nor heard about the card reader until the election’s day. Rural people have no knowledge on the role of the card reader in electoral process. There was a lot of misconception about the device. However, to some of the electorates, the card reader was a voting device. This inadequate information dissemination and poor sensitization of the electorates on the card reader led to bad human relations and uncooperative attitudes between some of the illiterate electorates and electoral officers.

The training given to the ad-hoc and INEC staffs on the use of technology in the Nigeria’s electoral process especially the card reader was inadequate. As Alebiosu (2015), rightly observed that majority of the Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers in the polling units were not effectively trained on the proper use and handling of the card reader. In most cases the venues provided by INEC for their training were crowded and not conducive, such that most of the trainees did not properly received the instructions on the use of the card reader. There were imperfect practical demonstrations of how the card reader could properly be effective. In some cases, two card readers were provided for a class of hundred trainees. A large number of trainees did not have the opportunities of operating the device. In some cases, those that received training were replaced by those that have no idea on the use of the device. All of these led to the poor handling of the card reader during the elections to the extent that the protective film of some of the card reader were not removed thereby leading to the impossibility of the device to detect thumbprint in some cases (Alebiosu, 2015).

Amenaghawon (2015) also contended that technical hitches were recorded during the use of card reader machine. He further argued that lack of understanding among INEC’s ad-hoc staff on the need to remove film covering the machine from the screen of the device which could facilitate better fingerprint decoding, led to the outright malfunction or failure of the card reader machine. There were several incidences of smart card reader hitches recorded. For instance, during the 2015 general elections, it could be recalled that, former President Goodluck Jonathan’s PVC, could not be read by the machine which was quite embarrassing for the nation (Amenaghawon, 2015). Agbu (2015) recalled that the former President Goodluck Jonathan, (Presidential candidate of the PDP) and his wife, Patience did not used their PVCs to vote. After several failed attempts with five card readers that tried to read their thumbprints, Jonathan and the First Lady were eventually issued with incident forms for accreditation. They
were accredited to vote manually in line with stipulated INEC procedure.

According to Sibe (2015), the number one citizen of the country was left standing for over half an hour, in the presence of local and international observers. In Enugu state, similar incident occurred which compelled the Deputy Senate President, Senator Ike Ekweremadu, to advise the INEC to discard the use of SCRs for the polls, after he could not secure accreditation with the machine. Ekweremadu, too, was accredited with the incident form (Odiakose, 2015). According to Ekweremadu, “the card reader is not functioning optimally. It has made accreditation slow and stressful. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) did not listen to our advice. This card reader should have been tried in a bye-election or supplementary election before a major election as this. INEC should immediately discard it and allow everybody who presents his/her PVC to be accredited and vote. The card is not in our constitution. I and my wife had to be accredited manually” (as cited in Odiakose, 2015, p.5).

In Ebonyi State the card readers failed woefully, a development that compelled electoral officials to adopt incident forms to accredit voters. The former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator Anyim Pius Anyim, who is an indigene of the state, charged INEC to correct the lapses in the accreditation process linked to the SCRs in order to give credibility to the polls. In Lekki, Lagos State where the APC Vice Presidential candidate, Yemi Osinbajo and his wife voted, the accreditation process did not start until 10:00am. However, when the process eventually started, the card reader was non-functional. The development made Osinbajo and his wife Oludolapo worried. The same scenario played out in most of the polling units in Lagos State (Odiakose, 2015).

In his opinion Alebiosu (2015) maintained that, many smart card readers were not smart enough to function optimally. Some card readers were unable to function due to blank screen, nonactivation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device and low battery. Some INEC officials attributed the failure to INEC engineers who could not decode the inbuilt security installation in the card reader. The security code in the card reader was reportedly designed to update the time and date of voting. Ikenna, an INEC official claimed that the card readers were initially programmed for February 14 and that with the postponement to March 28, some of the card readers had not been reprogrammed (Odiakose, 2015). Sibe (2015), also said that signs of failure started showing early, but again, may be because we were too eager to show off our new found technology, we ignored them. You may recall that INEC did a so-called mock election for field testing of the card reader; a process which was not altogether hitch free. Curiously, while they announced a failure rate of 41% (fingerprint), they went on to say they were satisfied. How can you be satisfied with a machine that had a failure rate of about 41% in a critical biometric process? That error margin of 41% is an unacceptable margin for any sensitive public exercise such as this. Regrettably, on election’s day, the card readers failed en masse.

However, in some states (Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Kwara among others) card readers functioned, but few devices had some challenges of PVC authentication and verification. Many PVCs issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated, thereby disenfranchising some eligible voters in the elections. The inability of the device to capture the fingerprints of some voters was attributed to greasy or dirty fingers of the voters. In most cases, people had to scrub their hands on the ground just to ensure that the device recognizes their fingerprints.
Contributions of Technology to 2015 General Elections Administration in Nigeria

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the use of technology has significantly improved Nigeria’s electoral process. It has ensured accuracy, credibility, security and above all reduction in litigation.

Accuracy

Unarguably, Nigeria’s electoral history had been characterized by electoral fraud, since independence. Eguavon (2009) declared that Nigerian political experience had shown that the country has never had crisis-free and fair elections. Elections in Nigeria are hardly devoid of malpractices and violence. Therefore, the “successes” achieved in the 2011 and 2015 general elections should not just be glossed over. Zainawa (2015) explained further that Nigeria’s population is about 168 million and 73.5 million of these were registered voters in 2011. There are 36 states, 774 local government areas as well as Federal Capital Territory. Nigeria has 8,809 registration areas and 119,973 polling units. Similarly, there are 109 senatorial districts, 160 federal constituencies. This territory is largehence to conduct free and fair election without technological appliance, is doubtful. This is why Zainawa (2015) opined that, “there is no doubt that the use of ICT infrastructure has drastically improved the democratic quality of electoral process in Nigeria. First the use of Direct Data Capture Machine (DDCM) during voters registration exercise resulted in more dependable voters’ registration lists in all polling units with fewer or no ghost voters and more reliable information on each voter, thereby checking and minimizing multiple registrations by voters” (p.17).

Again, commenting on the use of Permanent Voter’s Card (PVC) Mohammed (2015) noted that, “Nigerians have…hailed the plan by INEC to use the card reader to give Nigeria credible polls. Only dishonest politicians, those who plan to rig, those who have engaged in massive purchase of PVCs and those who have something to hide are opposed to the use of the machine (as cited in Nwangwu, 2015, p.14). However, most of the hitches reported by the Electoral Monitory Groups, both local and international observers, were corrected and improved upon. As Nwangwu (2015) captured it, “INEC as an institution improved significantly from the March 28 to the April 11, 2015 elections in the area of logistics, materials provision and mastery of the biometric technology by the polling officers. The Commission was able to correct its mistakes of March 28 to deliver freer, fairer, and more credible governorship and State House of Assemblies elections” (p.16).

Credibility

The 2015 general elections that took place in Nigeria, was globally seen as the best election Nigeria ever had. This was as a result of technology that associated with it. Davis and Chelsea (2010) maintained that: Technologies have the potential to make elections more efficient, more transparent and more responsive to the needs of the electorate. For example, technologies can assist election administrators to store and search huge amounts of data, easily identify multiple registration in voters register, prevent voters from voting in more than one polling stations, prevent multiple voting, speed up the tabulation of results and expedite boundary delimitation exercises (as cited in Apentsui, Osman, Yahaya, Fuseini & Issah, 2015, p.5).

Similarly, Nwangwu (2015) claimed that, “while the use of the biometric technologies did not entirely make the elections free and fair, they however accounted for their
credibility (p.16). Jega (2015), the former Chairman of INEC was happy hence declared that:

We have made rigging impossible for them (electoral fraudsters) as there is no how the total number of votes cast at the polling unit could exceed the number of accredited persons, such discrepancy in figure will be immediately spotted. The technology made it impossible for any corrupt electoral officer to connive with any politician to pad-up result. The information stored in both the card readers and the result sheet taken to the ward levels would be retrieved once there is evidence of tampering... (as cited in Nwangwu, 2015, p.16).

It should also be recalled that the voters’ turnout was encouraging and the results of the elections were impressive. The two zones that produced the key presidential aspirants, South-South (President Jonathan) and North West (General Buhari) recorded the largest turnout.

The elections were keenly contested, and Nigerians expressed joy in participating in 2015 general elections. As National Democratic Institute (2015) rightly stated:

The election highlighted strong and enthusiastic commitment of Nigerians to democratic process and the possibility of determining the leadership of the country through peaceful, transparent and credible elections.... Nigerian voters conducted themselves peacefully and orderly on election days. Politicians across the spectrum should recognize and respect this public manifestation of citizens’ commitment to the democratic process. (as cited in Nwangwu, 2015, p.18).

Nigerian image that was completely battered as a result of previous general elections conducted by the government of Chief Obasanjo in 2003 and 2007, regained its dignity as a result of technology. Immediately after, the declaration of result and its attendant acceptance by the key constants (especially President Jonathan who conceded defeat), local and international goodwill messages starting pouring into the country. In his goodwill message, Dr. Bakili Muluzi, the Head of Commonwealth Observer Group, remarked that, “despite the organization and technical deficiencies, the conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly Elections were generally peaceful and transparent” (as cited in Muluzi: 2015:4). John Kuffour, the former President of Ghana who headed ECOWAS Election Observer Mission, commented that, “the Nigerian elections were pride not only to Nigerians, but also to West Africa and the whole of the African continent (Adamu, 2015, p.6). Kuffuor praised President Goodluck Jonathan for creating an appropriate environment for peaceful elections. Similarly, former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, appreciated the peaceful conduct of the 2015 general elections and congratulated the entire citizens and government of Nigeria for conducting peaceful and orderly elections. Mr Satiago that led the European Union Election Observer Mission (EU-EOM) commended the Nigerian people, political parties, and other stakeholders for the successful conduct of the 2015 general elections. Added to this, the United States’ Secretary of State, John Kerry congratulated Nigerians and the government on the historic and largely peaceful elections. Kerry also commended the Independent National Electoral Commission’s Chairman, Attahiru Jega:
On the generally orderly vote, on the use of technology such as card readers to increase the credibility and transparency of the electoral process and on prompt communication of results. The statement noted that while there were reports of logistical problems, such incidents did not undermine the overall outcome of the result. The government of the United States lauded both the former President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari for their public commitments to the Abuja Accord signed in January and reaffirmed on March 26, 2015…(Kerry, 2015 as cited in Maruf, 2015, p.20).

Again, at the local level, General Abdulsalam, Abubakar (rtd), the former Head of State, who served as the Chairman of National Peace Committee, described the elections as peaceful. Abubakar thanked the former President, Jonathan for showing statesmanship by conceding defeat and congratulated General Buhari (rtd) on his victory in the presidential elections. However, Moruf (2015) noted that the 2015 general elections attracted attention from international community in view of its anticipated violence, but for the introduction of technology, Nigeria would have experienced instability.

**Security**

Election-related violence is one of the factors that warranted civil society groups to support technology in the Nigeria’s electoral process. Udom and Ojo (2010) reported that in 2003, 105 deaths were recorded while 300 deaths occurred in 2007 general elections. Jega, the then Chairman of INEC warned on 11th February 2011 that, “we are already seeing the ugly head of electoral violence around the country, not only in areas that are experiencing communal and political violence, unrelated to elections, like Jos, Plateau, Niger Delta and Borno State but in other relatively quiet parts of the country” (as cited in International Crisis Group, 2011, p.4).

Prior to the 2015 general elections, there were hate speeches nationwide. It should be recalled that on 11th August, 2014, the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) issued ultimatum to former President Jonathan to rescue Chibok girls and end insurgency in the North by October 2014, or otherwise forget his 2015 ambition. The group also warned on 14th October 2014, that those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 general elections will be considered enemies of the North. Edwin Clerk, Ijaw Ethnic Leader (from Jonathan’s ethnic group) replied the Northern Elders Forum that, “we cannot continue to feed this country and we are not ruling the country.” Asari-Dokubo, former militant leader and founder of Niger Delta Peoples’ Salvation Front (NDPSF) threatened violence, if the former President Jonathan was not re-elected. Asari warned, “2015 is more than do-or-die... it is our very survival that is being challenged, and we must tell them... “We are going to meet in a battlefield” (as cited in International Crisis Group, 2015, p.4). Again in May, 2012, the presidential candidate of APC, General Buhari (rtd), threatened the nation by saying “God willing by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 should happen again in 2015, by the grace of God, they dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood.” Tinubu, the APC leader also added that, “it is going to be rig and roast, we are prepared not to go to court but to drive you out….for every action there will be reaction” (as cited in International Crisis Group, 2015, p.7). Akpabio, the former Governor of Akwa Ibom State reacted that, “those who want to take power through the back door will die! and PDP will continue” (Thisday, 25 July 2014 as cited in International Crisis Group, 2015, p.7).

In view of all these hate speeches, the international community rose up and warned against violence in Nigeria. Kofi Anan, the
former Secretary-General of United Nations and Emeka Anyaoku, the former Secretary General of Commonwealth of Nations initiated peace deal between the two major contestants; former President Jonathan and General Buhari (rtd). Thabo Mbeki, the former President of South Africa, John Kuffor, the former President of Ghana, Abdulsalami Abubakar, the former Head of State of Nigeria, added voices and pleaded for peaceful elections (Osundare, 2015). Similarly, David Cameroun, the former British Prime Minister, Ban Ki Moon, the former UN Secretary-General registered their concern for peaceful elections in Nigeria. Even Barak Obama, the former President of the United States warned politicians against violence in Nigeria (Osundara, 2015).

All these explain why Jega should be seen as a national hero. Jega has averted the civil war that would have associated with the 2015 general elections, if he had jettisoned technology in the process, after all, “the integrity of electoral process is fundamental to the overall integrity of the democratic process as well as stability of the political system” (Iwu, 2008 as citd in Idike, 2014, p.140). EU-Election Observer Mission (2015) reported that the elections were generally peaceful except few states in the South-South (Akwa Ibom and Rivers). There was no serious attack by Boko Haram, apart from few people that were killed in Gombe state on 28th March, 2015 (election’s day).

Unlike 2007 general elections which International Crisis Group (2007) reported that, “violence had been a major concern of many stakeholders before the elections, as clashes escalated between supporters of the major parties” (p.4).

It was as a result of the peaceful outcome of the election, that the winner President Buhari was invited by the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized nations to present a “Wish List”. The “Wish List” was considered during the Group of Seven (G-7) 41st Summit held in Bavaria, between 7th and 8th June, 2015. President Buhari also met with the world leaders; such as Angela Merkel (Germany), Barrack Obama (United States), Francois Hollande (France), David Cameroun (Britain), Shinzo Ape (Japan), Jim Yong Kim (South Korea) Stephen Harper (Canada) among others. In the same vein, the President Buhari, used his foreign trip to discourse ways of revamping Nigerian economy with the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) boss, Christine Laggard, Guy Rider (the President of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among others (Nwagwu, 2015). Indeed, this would not have happened but for the introduction of technology into Nigeria’s electoral process.

**Reduction in Litigation**

It is important to point out here that the role of judiciary in the electoral process cannot be over emphasis. Indeed, both the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the 2010 Electoral Act provided that election petition tribunals should adjudicate on petitions filed by complainants against the conduct of elections. Therefore, court is the only institution after the Independent National Electoral Commission that can determine, “the winner of an election or review and reverse the pronouncement of the Returning Officer….” (Nwagwu, 2015, p.23).

It should be recalled that before the final result of the presidential elections was declared, President Jonathan was convinced that the process was transparent, hence congratulated General Buhari (rtd) on his success. This exemplary conduct of the President was emulated by many defeated PDP Governorship and National Assembly candidates in states like Niger, Benue, Adamawa, Lagos, Kaduna, and Oyo. Those who would have gone to court, to seek redress, accepted defeat and congratulated the winners. Again, those that actually petitioned were mainly from the South South and South East geopolitical zones. Leva and Ibrahim (2015) maintained that, “a
breakdown of the petitions show that the South South and South East geopolitical zones have so far recorded the highest cases of about 95 and 93 petitions respectively with Delta State topping the chart in the South South with 40 petitions while Imo takes the lead in the South East with 38 cases” (p.4).

Table 1: Election Petitions from each Zone after the 2015 General Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Geo-Political Zone</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>South South</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Though, the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Mahmud Mohammed inaugurated 242 judges on 3rd February, 2015 to determine election-related dispute.

Nwangwu (2015) maintained that, “unlike the 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 general elections, the 2015 elections witnessed a general reduction in election litigations. The total number of petitions filed after the 2003 general elections was 560. By 2007, the petitions increased to 1,290. A total of 731 elections petitions were filed at various Election Petition Tribunals across the federation after the 2011 General Elections” (p.23).

This success in the reduction of litigation can be attributed to the use of technology especially the Permanent Voters Card and the Smart Card Reader (SCR). Therefore, contestants were convinced that they were not cheated.

Conclusion

Globally, election is the major instrument of recruiting political leadership and ensuring good governance in a democratic society. Active participation of the people in the entire electoral process is needed before democracy could be seen as inclusive. However, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) assists in enhancing the inclusiveness. Technology enables Nigerians to participate in the entire electoral process with hope that their vote must surely count. Gone are the days politicians were bragging that they don’t need to beg for votes, whether the electorates vote or not, they must surely be announced winners. The adoption of Smart Card Reader Machine has become a legacy for which history must remember and honour. Hence, electorates should be ready to shun money politics and refuse to sell their Permanent Voters’ Card, no matter how attractive the price may be. As Makama and Muhammed (2015) had noted, “anybody that has a permanent Voter’s Card has automatically become a stakeholder. Politicians that are known to be pompous and arrogant have been rendered irrelevant and ineffective in the present dispensation of things” (P.124)

Recommendations

This paper hereby recommends the following:

(i) Amendment of Electoral Act 2010 section 52. This Act prohibited the
use of electronic in voting, here in Nigeria. Nigeria has a large population of not less than 170 million. Countries like China, India, United States and Bangladesh that have this similar population have amended their electoral acts to accommodate electronic voting. The electronic voting would enhance accuracy, reliability, transparency and above all strengthen the electoral management bodies as umpire in the electoral process.

(ii) Staff Training and Development: It should be recalled that one of the greatest problems, INEC had in 2015 general elections was inadequate training. Both the permanent and the ad-hoc staff were not well trained on the operation of biometric machine as well as Smart Card Reader. Some polling units started elections late, simple because the INEC Staff were waiting for further instructions on the operation of the Smart Card Reader Machine. In other places, due to ignorant, INEC staff decided to use Incident Forms instead of machines. All these happened due to lack of adequate training for the staff.

(iii) Change of Attitude: It is unfortunate that, despite the international commendation of 2015 general elections, some undesirable elements, especially politicians continue to oppose the use of technology in Nigeria’s electoral process. The reason is well known. They are now unable to benefit from their fraud; hence they hate the changes that are taking place in the electoral process. This paper pleads with those groups to have a change of heart and embrace technology, in order to move the nation forward.
References


