# Effectiveness of Character Education in Reducing Vote-Buying in Election Rigging in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Character education is an* umbrella term *loosely used to describe the manner that will help an individual to develop various moral, civic, good, mannered, behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant or socially acceptable beings. There are dozens of character education programmes in, and vying for adoption by, schools and businesses. Some are commercial, some non-profit and many are uniquely devised by states, districts and schools, themselves. A common approach of these programmes is to provide a list of principles, pillars, values or virtues, which are memorized or around which themed activities are planned. It is commonly claimed that the values included in any particular list are universally recognized. However, there is no agreement among the competing programmes on core values (e.g., honesty, stewardship, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, justice, equality, and respect) or even how many to list. There is also no common or standard means for assessing, implementing or evaluating programmes. This study recommended that, the educational institutions have a duty and responsibility to conduct moral education (moral education) for the students and also build community culture for moral values, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should engages more actively in civic or democracy education about civic responsibilities and the importance of participation in elections and there should be need to speed up the processing of identity documents to increase participation.*

*Keywords:    effectiveness, character education, vote buying, election, rigging*

## Introduction

Character education foster ethical, responsible and caring for young people by modelling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share. It is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts and states to instill in their students' important core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others. Character education is not a "quick fix." It provides long-term solutions that address moral, ethical and academic issues of growing concern to our society and key to the safety of our schools (Character Education Partnership, 2010).

Character education is to describe the teaching of children and adults in a

manner that will help them develop moral, civic, good manner, behavior, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant or socially acceptable beings. Concepts that now and in the past have fallen under this term include social and emotional learning, moral reasoning and cognitive development, life skills education, health education, violence prevention, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and conflict resolution and mediation. Many of these are now considered failed programs, i.e. "religious education," "moral education," "values clarification." There are dozens of character education programs in, and vying for adoption by, schools and businesses. Some are commercial, some non-profit and many are uniquely devised by states, districts and schools, themselves. A common approach of these programs is to provide a list of principles, pillars, values or virtues, which are memorized or around which themed activities are planned. It is commonly claimed that the values included in any particular list are universally recognized. However, there is no agreement among the competing programs on core values (e.g., honesty, stewardship, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, justice, equality, and respect) or even how many to list. There is also no common or standard means for assessing, implementing or evaluating programs (Damon, Renninger& Sigel, 2007).

## Implementation of Character Education

Character education can be initiated at any grade level. It is important to set a strong foundation during the earlier grades and to reinforce and build upon that foundation during the later grades. To be effective, character education must include the entire school community and must be infused throughout the entire school curriculum and culture. The program must stress the qualities of patriotism, responsibility, citizenship, and kindness; respect for authority, life, liberty, and personal property; honesty; charity; self-control; racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance; and cooperation. Five keys; to success of Character Education are:

- Instruction must be planned: Character education will not just happen. Direct instruction must be planned in advance. Once organized, this will serve as a springboard to other ideas and school-wide activities.

- Application: Students must be able to apply what they have learned. Learning the definition of diligence does a child little good if he seldom sees it in action.

- Teacher-friendly: All instructional and school-wide components of the program must be as teacher friendly as possible. This increases the likelihood of the program being accepted by the teachers and taught effectively.

- Supported by all: To reach its fullest potential, the program should be supported by everyone in the school. School leaders can make it important by providing

the necessary materials, scheduling time for the programmes and assemblies, and talking about it frequently.

- Prepare the students: Middle school and high school students often approach the notion of character education with scepticism. Substantial, well planned efforts must be made to create a school climate conducive to maximum buy-in by students (Character Education Informational Handbook & Guide II (2001).

## The Need for Character Education

The intentional teaching of good character is particularly important in today's society since our youth faces many opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations. They are bombarded with many more negative influences through the media and other external sources prevalent in today's culture. Therefore, it is critical to create schools that simultaneously foster character development and promote learning. Character Education Informational Handbook & Guide II(2001).An increasing proportion of young people are growing up without a firm understanding or commitment to the core ethical values needed to inform an energize the conscience. As a result, they lack internal mechanisms to help them know right from wrong and to generate the will power to exercise self-control and consistently do what is right (Josephson, 2002).

## Election

Elections are thought of as the heart of the political process. Perhaps no questions in politics are as crucial as do we elect the politicians who rule over us, and under what rules are these elections held? Elections are seen as nothing less than democracy in practice. They are a means through which the people can control their government, ultimately by 'kicking the rascals out'. According to Heywood (2004), Election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people (electorate). Elections may not in themselves be a sufficient condition for political representation, but there is little doubt that they are a necessary condition. Indeed, some thinkers have gone further and portrayed elections as the very heart of democracy. This was the view developed by Schumpeter in Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (1942) as cited in Heywood (2004), which portrayed democracy as an 'institutional arrangement', as a means of filling public office by a competitive struggle for people's vote. Ashe put it, 'democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them'. In interpreting democracy as nothing more than a political method, Schumpeter in effect identified it with elections, and specifically with competitive elections. While few modern democratic theorists are prepared to reduce democracy simply to

competitive elections, most nevertheless follow Schumpeter in understanding democratic government in terms of the rules and mechanisms that guide the conduct of elections.

According to Heywood (2004), conduct of elections in any democratic societies informed certain/cardinal questions such as; (1) which offices or post are subject to elective principle? Although elections are widely used to fill those public offices whose holders have policy-making responsibilities (the legislature and executive in particular), key political institutions are sometimes treated as exceptions. This applies, for instance, to the second chambers of legislature in states such as the UK and Canada, and where constitutional monarchs still serve as heads of states. 2) Who is entitled to vote, how widely is the franchise drawn? 3) How are votes cast? 4) Are elections competitive or non-competitive? 5) How is election conducted?

The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defines Election as "the process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members." What appears to be a more inclusive definition was provided by Bain as cited in Okolie (2004) "the formal process by which the electorate selects official and determines the issues submitted to it." It is therefore a procedure for choosing officers or making binding decisions concerning policy by the vote of those formally qualified to participate. Meanwhile, to vote is to make a decision. Decision underlies all voting, and when voting has finally been done, it suggests that a decision or decisions have been taken. Thus in its most formal sense, election refers to "a procedure for choosing officers or making binding decisions concerning policy by the vote of those formally qualified to participate" (Encyclopedia Americana,1996).

Akzin in Okolie (2004) distinguishes between technical and social significance of election. According to him, election in a technical sense is "the process by which an office is assigned to a person by an act of volition needing the simultaneous expression of opinion by many people." Furthermore, he emphasized that socially, election is "the process by which a person is linked to an office with due provision for the participation of the people meant to come under the officer's authority" Akzin, in Okolie (2004). The social aspect of election suggests the idea of ruling a society with the consent of the ruled. This tantamount to democracy, and differentiates election from appointment.

## Voting Behaviour

The growth of academic interest in voting behaviour coincided with the rise of behavioural political science. As the most widespread and quantifiable form of political behaviour, voting quickly became the focus for new techniques of sample surveying and statistical analysis. The *American Voter* (Campbell et

al, 1960) cited in Heywood (2004), the product of painstaking research by the University of Michigan, became the leading work in the field and stimulated a wealth of similar studies, such as Butler and Stokes' *Political Change in Britain* (1969) cited in Heywood (2004). At the high point of the behavioural revolution it was thought that voting held the key to disclosing all the mysteries of the political system, perhaps allowing for laws of mass political psychology to be developed. Even though thes lofty hopes have not been fulfilled, psephology (the scientific study of voting behaviour) still commands a central position in political analysis. This is because voting provides one of the richest sources of information about the interaction between individuals, society and politics. By investigating the mysteries of voting behaviour, we are thus able to learn important lessons about the nature of the political system, and gain insight into the process of social and political change (Heywood, 2004). Voting is one of the cardinal principles of the democratic system of government and the importance of political and election participations in democratic societies have increased dramatically. This brings us to a sharper definition of voting; therefore, voting in this capacity refers to aggregating individual preferences into a collective decision in an election, the action of formally indicating one's choice of candidate or political party at an election (Gerber, Green and Shachar, 2003). Voting denotes the means whereby a number of persons are enabled to indicate their agreement or disagreement with some prepositions or their preferences as between two or more proposals or between two or more candidates for some offices. It is therefore a means of aggregating individual preference into a collective decision. The term generally refers to the process by which citizens choose candidates for public office or decide political questions submitted to them.

According to Bromhead (1960) as cited in Okolie (2004), voting denotes the means whereby a number of persons are enabled to indicate their agreement or disagreement with some prepositions, or their preferences as between two or more proposals or between two or more candidates for some office. It is therefore a means of aggregating individual preference into collective decisions. As noted by Stoke in Okolie (2004), voting is not the sole means of aggregating individual preferences; other means include market mechanisms and processes of informal interaction in many social and political groups. Usually when a vote is taken the decision of the majority prevails; for some types of decisions, it may be provided that there must be an absolute majority of those qualified to vote, or some majority greater than half, either of all those qualified to vote or of all these actually voting, for a particular decision to be valid. A voice vote, in which the voters shout "yes or no," is simple and quick, but acceptable as a final

decision only if those declared to be in minority are satisfied that they really are in a minority (Okolie, 2004).

Voting in elections into public offices is usually conducted using ballot boxes. Voting therefore takes the form of thumb printing in the ballot paper provided. Voting processes have undergone transformations over the year in Nigeria, from secret ballot system; the electoral commission experimented with open-ballot system, and modified open-secret ballot system (Okolie, 2004). The voting system varies from country to country but one basic point that underlie all voting in a given socio-formation is decision making. To vote is to make a decision about a particular issues or issues at stake. However, the direction of the decision is determined by certain factors which shape voting behaviour. Voting Behaviour according to connotes a collection of attitudes, values and beliefs in which individuals of a given society have towards elections both at the local, national and international level. While Harrop and Miller using a constructivist paradigm, explained voting behaviour as a pattern of political participation mostly taking place in democratic societies where people react to certain laid down values, principles and beliefs how they choose their leaders. These set of beliefs could be based on age, sex, ethnicity, religion and education.

Voting behaviour is clearly shaped by short-term and long-term influences. Short-term influences are specifics to a particular election and do not allow conclusion to be drawn about voting patterns in general. The chief short-term influence is the state of the economy, which reflects the fact that there is usually a link between government's popularity and economic variables such as unemployment, inflation and disposable income. Another short-term influence on voting is the personality and public standing of party leaders. This is particularly important, because media exposure portrays leaders as the brand image of their party (Heywood, 2004).

Furthermore, there are various theories in explaining voting behaviour in human society namely the sociological, rational choice, party identification and clientelistic models (see, for example, Van de Walle, 2003; Brooks, Nieuwbeerta and Manza, 2006; Szwarcberg, 2013). Party Identification theory is based on the sense of psychological attachment that people have to parties (Heywood, 2004). Electors are seen as people who identify with a party, in the sense of being long-term supporters who regard the party as 'their party'. Voting is therefore a manifestation of partisanship, not a product of calculation influenced by factors such as policies, personalities, campaigning and media coverage (Heywood, 2004). Sociological model links voting behaviour to group membership, suggesting that electors tend to adopt a voting pattern that reflects the economic and social position of the group to which they belong. Rather than developing a psychological attachment to a party on the basis of

family influence, this model highlights the importance of a social alignment, reflecting the various divisions and tensions within society. Also, the rational-choice model shift attention onto the individual and away from socialization and the behaviour of social groups. In this view, voting is seen as a rational act, in the sense that individual electors are believed to decide their party preference on the basis of personal self-interest (Heywood, 2004).

## Contributing to Buying factors and Voting Behaviour

Patronage, or clientelism, can also be an important determinant of voting behaviour (Van de Walle, 2003). In a clientelistic relationship politicians tend to use their power to provide economic privileges or other material favours to voters in return for their political support at the polls (Szwarcberg, 2013). A form of clientelism often referred to as 'vote-buying' has been found to be prevalent in Africa and emphasizes the handing out of money and gifts to win voters during election campaigns. In order to verify this, some respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements:

| | Statements | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I would vote for a party because the party promises to look after households like mine | 8 (80%) | 2 (20%) |
| 2. | I would vote for a party because the party provides social grants | 10 (100) | - |
| 3. | I would vote for a party because they give food parcels | 9 (90) | 1 (10) |
| 4. | Giving social grants to people is a form of bribery or not | 7 (70) | 3 (30) |
| 5. | Handing out food parcels before elections is like buying votes | 6 (60) | 4 (40) |
| Total | | 40 (80%) | 10 (20%) |

*Source: Author, 2021*

The following figure reports those who agree or agree (ratings score with their percentage (%)) with the five statements relating to support for a party based on the potential benefits for respondents and their households, by the respondents' electoral choice. Overall, deduced that 40 (80%) agreed with the statement above by chosen YES while 10 (20%) disagreed with the above statement by chosen NO. However, the above result shows that people make their decisions on voting based on the benefits received by the respondents going for a post at national level or statement level.

## Election Rigging: Use of Smartcard Reader

From the time of the First Republic, Nigeria's electoral history has been characterised by grave incidences of electoral rigging. Nigerian politics has never had crisis-free and fair elections. Elections in Nigeria have never been devoid of malpractice and violence. After attaining political independence in 1960, Nigeria had a parliamentary system of government. During the general elections four years later Nigeria ran into serious problems. Accusations and counter-accusations of fraud and malpractice were widespread, with many lives lost and property destroyed. Political crises eventually led to the first military coup d'état in January 1966. Therefore, the successes achieved in the 2011 and 2015 elections should not simply be glossed over. They were major achievements that need to be dissected and documented in anticipation of future elections. Despite some disagreement with this perspective our hope is that these misgivings may be laid to rest.

Winning elections in Nigeria is a serious business because it is a sure way of accessing state resources. As an aspiring democratic state, periodic free and fair elections are one of the pillars for sustaining democracy. A free and fair election is a desideratum for the existence of democracy. A democratic government ideally denotes government composed through the freely given consent of the people as expressed in an election. Once the element of free consent is absent in an electoral process, then the outcome is no a longer democracy, but dictatorship (Aborisade, 2003 in Heywood (2004)). Any election fraught with fraud and violence is therefore a usurpation of the sovereignty of the people, the equivalent of an electoral coup. Further, elections are one of the most important means of establishing legitimate government and exercising popular control over leaders. It is also a means of policy selection as set out in party manifestos during elections. An election is a process, and it is free if all stages of the process are devoid of inhibitions and contradictions. It is also fair if the process shows no favour to person, party or side. Fairness means acting in an honest and honourable manner that is in accordance with what is desirable according to rules (Okoh, 2005).

For Adebisi (2005), as quoted by Sarah Birch, a global authority on the subject of election malpractices, electoral malpractices could occur in three principal ways, namely:

- Manipulating the design of institutions governing elections to the advantage of one or more electoral contestants in violation of the principles of inclusivity, impartiality, openness or transparency, such as through gerrymandering, mal-apportionment, over-restrictive franchise or candidacy regulations.

- Campaign regulations that lead to inequalities among contestants.

- Lack of observer access to electoral processes.

## The Nigerian State and Unbridled Election Rigging

The penchance for violence and election rigging in Nigeria's electoral democracy needs to be understood in terms of the character of the Nigerian state and its aversion to transparency and accountability in the electoral process. Indeed, there is a running battle between primordialist forces and progressives over the ownership of the state. The character of the Nigerian state and society is fundamentally anarchical, mainly as a result of the multiplicity of ethnic groups and the political economy of the entity. This is largely a mono-product economy superintended by a distorted federal structure (Agbu, 2016). Its political structure and governance have been distorted since political independence in 1960: first, by colonialists; second, by the ethicized political class; and thirdly, by military politicians. The character of the Nigerian state therefore derives from the various experiences of the past as experienced under colonial rule, the various attempted, aborted and successful coups d'état (eleven as at the last count in 1997), ethnic politics, the civil war (1967–1970) as well as deep-rooted distrust among some of the ethnic nationalities, and settler/indigene crises across the country (Moru, 2004).

The elective principle was first introduced into Nigeria's electoral system in 1923 because of the corruption and money politics that characterized the Electoral College system (Babalola, 2003). This reduced corruption and money politics but failed to eliminate them. Although the 1979 constitution was a watershed experience in Nigeria's constitutional development, subsequent party politics were not much different from post-independent Nigeria. Political parties were formed largely along ethnic lines, while the political class politicized the ethnic divides. The Nigerian state was to witness a further crisis relating to revenue allocation, state creation, civil war, power-sharing, sectarian crises, and coups d'état that almost led to its disintegration. Since then, Nigeria has been bedeviled by claims of marginalization, separatist agitations, and resource control, attesting to the distorted nature of its political structure, and calls for its re-structuring.

Furthermore, the internet and the expansion of communication networks which goes with it, appear to be the most important technology affecting the world at present. Despite the importance of the Internet today, there is still some cultural lag whereby culture takes time to adjust to the material conditions embodied in technological change (Gyford, 2000). We note this against the background of those theories that suggest that technology changes society, rather than vice versa. The general technology theory attempts to addresses the

relationship between technology and society and raises questions of agency, determinism and autonomy. In the Nigerian case, it is the need to devise a reliable way to halt election rigging that led to the use of the PVC and SCR. In other words, societal imperative led to the use of the technology and not vice versa.

Permutations of ICT in electoral processes such as e-voting, its adoption and diffusion, could lead to significant improvement in democratic practices in various democracies around the globe. This phenomenon profoundly influenced Nigerian policy makers to explore the viability of adopting e-voting in their public elections (Ahmada, 2015). The Chairman of INEC, asserted that '...the whole world is moving in the direction of increasing the use of technology in order to have credible elections'. There are various factors that are bound to challenge the performance of the traditional paper ballot system of elections in Nigeria. These include the difficult topographical terrain of some communities in Nigeria, the movement of electorate and electoral officials as well as election materials to polling units and collation centers, and the tallying and collation of results. Moreover, communicating election results using traditional means of transportation expose the results to numerous risks such as attack by political thugs, aggrieved party members, or manipulation by corrupt officials. These constraining factors question the continued use of the traditional paper ballot system and therefore open up a window for the e-voting option.

## Inculcating of Character education in reducing the Vote buying

- It helps an individual to develop important human qualities such as justice, diligence, compassion, respect, and courage, and to understand why it is important to live by them.

- It promotes character development through the exploration of ethical issues across the curriculum.

- It develops a positive and moral climate by engaging the participation of students, teachers and staff, parents, and communities.

- It teaches how to solve conflicts fairly, creating safer schools that are freer of intimidation, fear, and violence, and are more conducive to learning.

- It not only cultivates minds, it nurtures hearts.

- f.It is critical for successful administrative and it helps an individual to understand the importance of virtues that create a caring and safe environment.

- It also teaches children the principles of how they can become successful and productive citizens. Without proper values of a caring citizenry, society would

crumble. It is imperative for the well-being of our society, that children be taught universal values.

- It creates an integrated culture of character that supports and challenges students and adults to strive for truthfulness and integrity.

- It creates schools where children feel safe because they are in an atmosphere that values respect, responsibility and compassion not because a guard or metal detector is posted at the door.

- It teaches adults and students to understand, engage in, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, citizenship, fairness, and responsibility for self and others in school and as part of a larger community.

## Conclusion

Character education is important for the growth of a human individual as a whole and should be done early. But that does not mean if you do not accommodate basic education of character building, educational institutions also felt no need to conduct it. It is important for an educational institution to not only pay attention to the needs of the academic competence of students, but also the character development so that graduates become graduates who are prepared academically and good character. The desire to build the character of students have poured into the strategic planning and program design in a systematic and integrated. Results from this programme do not directly alter the character of the students, but it is expected to give a positive color in an atmosphere of learning. For the future, the design of character education should be done with high commitment and continuous improvement of business done.

## Recommendations

Therefore, based on the conclusion above,

- The educational institutions have a duty and responsibility to conduct moral education (moral education) for the students and also build community culture for moral values.

- The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should engages more actively in civic or democracy education about civic responsibilities and the importance of participation in elections.

- There should be need to speed up the processing of identity documents to increase participation.

- The distribution of food parcels in communities during political campaigns before an election should not be allowed.

- The barriers to participation in elections by youth need to be studied and how to overcome this

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