

**ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA (1999-2011)**

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B.Sc. (Hons) (Business Admin.) (Unilag); M.Sc. (Public Admin) (Ife)  
**ADP10/11/H/0853**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR  
OF PHILOSOPHY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, OBAFEMI AWOLowo UNIVERSITY  
ILE-IFE, NIGERIA**

**2014**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a work of this magnitude, it would not have been possible to sail through without the guidance of Almighty Allah. His inestimable assistance and guidance helped me throughout the three years of stressful research work. In addition, my biggest thanks go to my Supervisor Dr. (Mrs) J.T. Makinde, who also doubled as the Head of Department of Public Administration during the first two years of my work. Every one of us refers to her as “Mama” which means “Mother”, for, that’s what she is. She is very humble and unassuming, but very thorough and strict when it comes to reading through my work and would not mind cancelling one-third of her students’ work, if not satisfied. At the end, her students always praise her for her thoroughness and guidance. It is my sincere prayer that may Almighty God continue to strengthen her in all areas of her needs and grant her (and her household) good health, long life and prosperity.

Next is Professor M.O. Okotoni. “Baba”, as we always refer to him, is a Godly man. The greatest quality of Professor Okotoni is his assistance to any student who approaches him for advice on his/her academic work, irrespective of the course or department of such a student. This is a rare quality. His advice and corrections have added quality to my work. May Almighty God continue to guide and guard him and his household and may he live long to reap the fruits of his labour.

All other lecturers within and outside the Department of Public Administration are also wonderful. They include: Drs. A.M. Oladoyin, Omoleke I.I., Ayo Adesopo (HOD Public Administration), Fayomi, I.O., Popoola O.O, (aka Pope), Mrs Ogbogu, Benson K.S., Olaiya T.A. Others are Messrs Ayeni, O.O, Sakpere, R.O., Hassan, A.O., Agboola T.O., Apeloko, D.O. Dr. Charles Ukeje of the Department of International Relations and Dr. Afolabi, O.S. of the Department of Political Science were of immense assistance to me.

I acknowledge with gratitude the encouragement received from my two parents which was all the tonic I needed to go ahead and register for my doctorate programme in 2011. However, a year into the course, my mother – Alhaja Munirat Asunke Oyewale, died on Wednesday April 11, 2012. May her soul rest in perfect peace.

My personal secretary, Rashidat Raji (Nee Abubakar) painstakingly typed and retyped my manuscripts several times without complaining. May God continue to assist her and her household.

In addition, the Secretary in the Department of Public Administration, Mr Odetayo and his colleagues were all of immense assistance to me. I am grateful to them.

I acknowledge with gratitude the advice from my colleagues – Pastor Deborah Ayoola, Mrs Akindele, Messrs Monehin and Ilawole. They have been very supportive.

My in-law, Mr Mutiu Odedokun, assisted me immensely to source some relevant materials from the internet. I am grateful to him.

Last but not the least, are my entire members of staff at Rak Unity Petroleum Company Limited, Omolabake Nursery and Primary School, Omolabake College, School of Preliminary Studies all in Offa and College of Education, Ilemona. They all encouraged me throughout the period of my course. I wish them good luck and God's guidance in all their endeavours.

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**Degree:** Ph.D. (Public Administration)  
**Year:** 2014

### Abstract

The study examined the features of the electoral system during the four general elections in Nigeria since 1999 to 2011; and evaluated the institutional infrastructures put in place for the administration of electoral systems. It also assessed the administration of electoral systems by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and examined the effects of changing electoral system as well as the challenges to the administration of the electoral system. These were with a view to providing information on the techniques and processes employed in the administration of electoral systems in Nigeria.

The study utilized primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary data were collected using questionnaire administration and conduct of indepth interviews. Two hundred and twenty nine copies of questionnaire were administered on respondents using purposive sampling technique, out of which a total of 171 (representing 75%) were completed and retrieved. The study covered the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the location of INEC headquarters; and three out of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, namely, South West; South East and North West. Out of the states selected from the target zones, three local government areas (LGAs) were purposively selected, including their state capitals. The distribution of the questionnaire was as follows: Directors at INEC headquarters (10); Civil Servants (45), fifteen

per study location; Tenured Political Office holders (30), ten per State; Electoral officers at the Local Government Areas (36), four in each of the three selected LGAs in the three selected States; Opinion leaders (36), four in each of the selected LGAs in the three States; Religious Leaders (36), four in each of the three selected LGAs in the three States; notable politicians (36), four in each of the three selected LGAs in the three States. Furthermore, indepth interviews were conducted with key senior officials at the National Electoral Commission (INEC) Abuja (3); Federal Electoral Officers (3) and State Resident Electoral Commissioners/Representatives in the target States (3). The senior INEC officials chosen were directly involved in implementing and supervising elections across the country during each electoral cycle. Secondary data were derived from official publications by INEC, Federal Government gazettes as well as books, journal articles, unpublished theses and the Internet. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and inferential statistics such as ANOVA and chi-square.

The results showed that the main feature of the electoral system during the four general elections in Nigeria since 1999 was the Simple Majority System. The institutional infrastructures put in place for the administration of elections since 1999 included Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (60%), Direct Data Capturing Machines (68%), Ballot Boxes (70%), Voters' Cards (76%), and Polling booths (80%). The results also showed the administration of the electoral systems by the electoral body during each of the four elections were significantly the same ( $F=2.24$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Furthermore the results showed an adverse effect on the credibility of elections  $t(6) = \pm 1.9439$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Finally, the results identified key challenges in the administration of the electoral system between 1999 and 2011 to include inadequate funding (56%), epileptic power supply (79%), inadequate trained staff (86%) and difficult terrain in transporting electoral materials (92%).

The study concluded that whereas the 2011 general elections were relatively adjudged fair by local and international observers, the administration of electoral system in Nigeria during

the study period was characterised by misappropriation of funds, electoral fraud, inadequate provision of security for officials, as well as inadequate training of electoral officers, leading to violence and petitions in the law courts.

**Supervisor:** Dr. (Mrs) J.T. Makinde

**Number of Pages:** 203

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The establishment of a good government through a fair electoral system would improve the socio-economic life of the citizenry especially where the right people are elected into the right places. In contrast, a government installed through a defective electoral process would result in chaos with the consequence of socio-economic and political instability and condemnation by the international community. Robert (1999) observed that if a government refuses to respond to the legitimate concern of its people and continues to manipulate the electoral process with impunity, the likelihood is that the opposition parties may conclude that violence is the only path to change. Examples abound in Africa, namely Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Libya and Cote D' Voire where thousands of innocent lives and properties worth billions of dollars had been lost to chaos and violence resulting from alleged electoral malpractices. A number of examples can be cited in the country. In the First Republic, there was large scale violence in the old Western Region – “the operation “*wetie*” (spray with petrol). The cumulative effect of this was the military take-over of the reigns of government in 1966. During the Second Republic, violence greeted the electoral malpractices across the country especially in Ondo and Oyo states. For example, the perceived manipulation and rigging of election that brought the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to power in the two states was unacceptable to the people. This was resisted with large scale of violence in various parts of the two states manifesting in the burning of houses, properties and the killing of human beings. Also, violent demonstration erupted over gubernatorial re-run election in Oye Local Government

of Ekiti State in 2010 where an alleged electoral malpractice led to a full-scale fight among various political thugs and supporters with devastating effects of loss of lives and properties. Properties such as houses, vehicles and equipment including those of Independent National Electoral Commission, were set ablaze. So serious was the situation that a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed by the State government for several days.

Most African countries now practice democracy. Having experienced prolonged military rule for decades, most African States, including Nigeria, now practice democratic governance. Even, the Arab countries whose traditional mode of governance is monarchical are mounting violent protests in favour of democratic governance. This gives credence to the belief that democracy is the most popular form of governance, perhaps one of the best ways of ensuring stable government and equitable distribution of resources among the populace. Democratic process is a function of several features. These include freedom of speech, freedom of association, the rule of law, conduct of regular elections as contained in the constitution, and the supremacy of the will of electorates (Adebayo, 1995).

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that “the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice” (Electoral Act, 2006). The underlying assumption of the aforementioned is that any society devoid of these features is authoritarian as exemplified by the Military that ruled Nigeria for about three decades at different times. The advanced countries of the world like the United States of America, Britain, France, among others did not attain democracy on a platter of gold. The journey to democracy in these countries was very tortuous. For example, USA was colonised by the British for several years until its independence on July 4, 1776. After its independence, it went through several years of trials by error, including a civil war that almost divided the country into two



different entities. After the civil war, USA, through sheer determination of its citizens, stabilised its democracy. Today, the USA is believed to practice one of the best forms of democracy in the world. England, too, did not taste any element of democracy until after several decades of nationhood (Ogbinmi, 1989). Once it started practising democratic principles, the country began to witness great improvements in its socio-economic development.

Before independence in 1960, Nigeria, which existed as an amalgam of the Northern and Southern Protectorates since 1914 had been operating on simple majority or First Past The Post (FPTP) election system and had witnessed three different elections. In September, 1923, the first election took place in Lagos and Calabar, following the introduction of the Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution in 1922 (Akerele, 2003; Iyayi, J. 2007). The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Herbert Macaulay won the three seats for the Lagos Legislative Council while the Calabar Improvement League (CIL) won the only seat for Calabar. In 1946, an indirect system of election took place following the introduction of Sir Arthur Richards (Lord Milverton) Constitution a year earlier. The Legislative

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