



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Multi-Party Democracy in Contemporary Ghana- The Electoral Process in Wa Municipality

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Abstract:

Teething challenges in Ghana's electoral process isa weakness in sustaining multi-party democracy. This study explores obstacles hindering the electoral process in a multi-party state system in Ghana with specific reference to Wa Municipality in the Upper West Region. The focus of this study was to examine obstacles militating against popular participation in the electoral process within the Wa Central Constituency. The study adapted a descriptive case study approach which involved six (6) communities, purposively selected based on the historical records of these areas on the conduct of the electoral process within the Constituency. Structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were employed to collect data. The results showed insufficient knowledge among respondents in the electoral process, apathy/low public participation during exhibition of voters register, politicians luring minors to register/influencing eligible registrants to engage in double registration, inadequate stakeholder consultation/involvement during electoral boundaries demarcation and insufficient funding among others as hampering the electoral process in Ghana. Broader consultations in delimiting boundaries to reduce violence, open continuous registration, Biometric registration, mechanisms to prevent minors from registering, public education on the electoral process and timely provision of funds for electoral activities are recommended in strengthening Ghana's electoral system. In conclusion, since the introduction of the 1992 constitution, the country has achieved political stability after going through five (5) general elections two of which involved a peaceful transfer of power from ruling government to another previously in opposition.

Keywords: Multi-Party Democracy, Electoral process, Wa Constituency, Ghana

1. Background of the Study

1.1. Introduction

Human existence has always been under a system of government in one way or the other(Hobbes, 1889). Life without 'a common power to keep them in awe' was described by, a seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, as a condition which is called 'war' (Cited by (Somerville & Santoni, 1963). Life will be chaotic and unsafe as the people live in total fear and uncertainty. The need to put in place a system that governs man's behavior as well as protects life and property cannot be overemphasized. In the opinion of (Rodee, Christol, Anderson, & Greene, 1983) 'men are so naturally aggressive, and civilization is so transparent a cover of man's darker passions, that only the strongest power can hold in check humanity's suicidal impulses'. By drawing inspiration from the writings of Thomas Hobbes in 1651, (Tuck, 1991):89 describes life in the state of nature as, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' and similarly notes that life under this condition is a 'war of every man against every man'. Indeed, Hobbes had suggested that it is extremely unlikely that human beings will live in security and cooperation without government. This, in his view, is because many people are prepared to use violence to attain ends especially if there is no government or police to stop them. Citizens therefore, enter

into social contract between themselves and government (Rodee et.al., 1983:25). In their opinion citizens agree to obey the laws and the government agrees to respect the citizens' rights.

Article 21, (1) and (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that the will of the people shall therefore be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. The primary concern of government is to ensure that, "every person is entitled to live their life in dignity and free from fear, with a fair share in their country's resources and an equal say in how they are governed" (Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, & Weir, 2008).

Systems of governance are necessary for the maintenance of law and order for peaceful co-existence. From primitive to the most advanced societies, different systems of governance have evolved for the protection of life and property of the citizens (Bassiouni et al., 1998).

In Ghana, there have been experiments with two systems of governance—military and democratic—since the advent of the country's independence. According to (Ocran, 1977):80), military involvement in Ghana's politics was occasioned by lack of leadership or weak leadership as in Ghana under Busia; tyranny, again as in Ghana under Nkrumah; corruption and unjustifiable acquisition of wealth. Whatever the reasons may be, military rule is inimical to the interest of society and that military is not suited for government (Oquaye, 1980). This is because military regimes are characterized by systems of dictatorship in which the governed are mostly excluded from the decision making processes as their sovereign will become perceived as supreme interest of what the governing body does.

On the contrary, democratic governance allows the people to choose the leaders to serve in public office by acting in the supreme interest of those they represent. Democracy is therefore an attractive form of government because its principles embrace these human needs and desires and can often deliver them in reality. And the more experience people have of living in a democracy, the more they support democracy (Beetham et.al., 2008).

In a democratic system of government, there is an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's votes" (Dalton, 2013; Mackie, 2009; O'Donnell, 2001; Schmitter, 2001; Wohlgemuth, 2002). The principled differences of opinion - and the tolerance of diversity and dissent - are important part of the democratic process and the expression of conflicting new point can actually help to open up dialogue and create a better understanding of the issues.

Ghana's experience with both systems for many years after independence was characterized by one system taking over from the other. But by 1992, a conclusion somehow was reached in a referendum held on 31st March, 1992, where Ghanaians voted overwhelmingly to adopt a democratic system of government (Badu & Larvie, 1996) - a system which was to fall in line with the newly emerging governance structure worldwide. In the opinion of (Amponsah & Boafo-Arthur, 2003)), the decision to return to democratic rule was as a result of both internal and external pressures. Internal explanations focus on major socio-economic transformations; mobilization by social movements and civil society organizations; class alliances; challenges and revolutions, and elite agreements and concessions (Beetham et.al., 2008). Internally, the masses of the people and more especially organized Civil Society groups such as Ghana Bar Association, Ghana Trade Union and others demonstrated their resentment against authoritarian rule by protesting against military regime. Externally the international community, especially the World Bank and other donor agencies, made democratic governance conditionality in the granting of financial assistance to developing countries. In 1991, the belief in democratic governance was affirmed in Harare by the Heads of governments of countries under the Commonwealth when they noted that;

... the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief, and in the individual inalienable right to participate by means of free democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she live (Amponsah and Boafo-Arthur, 2003:249).

Generally, a democratic system allows direct participation in choosing public office holders through the electoral process. According to (Walzer, 2006)) and (Hansen, 2010)), democracy is the rule of the many. Boafo-Arthur (2006:61) cited Nansen to argue that election is "a major institutional pillar of liberal democracy". This system, in his opinion, allows participation which enables people to directly influence the decisions that affect their lives. Participation, in his view, is only one of the three requirements for the state to be democratic: the other two are competition for political position (meaning that positions are filled through elections rather than arbitrary choice) and civil and political liberties (such as the freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organization, etc). Research on mass support for democracies appears to portray an inevitable march toward liberal democracies. Not only have the past twenty years witnessed the spectacular collapse of several autocracies, but public support for democratic regimes is at a historic high (Klingemann, 1998; Norris, 1999). Democracies as opposed to authoritarian regimes are preferred by large majorities not only in affluent countries, but also by majorities of publics in less developed countries across the world (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003). Elections play an important role in every democratic process. In fact, elections lie in the heart of democratic politics. It is a decision making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. What is crucial in election is about which party can address bread-and-butter issues on the economy, education, health, unemployment and other developmental issues. The electoral process should afford the electorate the opportunity to make this choice through elections. Thus, it stands to suggest that ensuring credibility and transparency in all processes leading to an election must be deemed as critical building blocks. The objective of democracy is to give people the right to choose. Through elections, they select and gain control over their political leaders (Asante, 2008).

On one hand, election's outcomes are expected to foster peace and stability in the country as a necessary precondition for development. On the other, it allows the chosen representatives to hold positions of authority and determine policies, programs and the future direction of the government actions. The overarching ambition therefore is that democracy will promote rule of law,

accountability and hence put pressure on public office holders to conduct themselves in a responsible manner. It also allows competition of ideas, programs and policies to thrive. The important role elections play in the peaceful transition from one government to another cannot be over emphasized. In the aftermath of the 2000 general elections, the significance of the successful outcome in the process was summed up as follows:

For the first time in the history of our nation, a president has been elected through the universal adult suffrage to take over from a democratically elected leader. By this feat Ghanaians have lived up and probably surpassed the high expectations of the international community (Public Agenda, January 9-14, 2001).

No matter how noble democratic ideals may seem to convey, outcomes of these experiments in Africa and elsewhere have also shown how such a system of governance can itself become a recipe for acrimony, disaffection and violent conflicts. The threats of defeat at the polls exerts pressure on people seeking power and this sometimes tends to raise questions about the credibility of systems and structures put in place to make the entire process free and fair.

1.2. Problem Statement

Multi-party systems of democratic governance are proving to be a mixed basket of products throughout Africa, and Ghana is no exception. While elections are supposed to anchor sustainable democracy, in some countries elections have become a cost to democracy itself (Kargbo, Hamdok, & Kadima, 2008; Ogbeidi, 2010). They contended that the quality of an election constitutes one of the determinants for deepening democratic governance. In recent times, the electoral process in Ghana is faced with a number of problems that affect legitimacy and credibility of elected representatives. Activities before, during and after elections are sometimes characterized by communal conflicts which sometimes lead to loss of human life and property in our societies. For example, the 2004 Presidential elections results were disputed by the opposition NDC Party and later settled in court. There were also incidents of violence and mob actions reported in Tamale Central, Tamale North, Saboba, Zabzugu/Tatale constituencies in the Northern region (Elections Report, 2005). Similar cases of violence were recorded in some areas of the Upper West Region. At Busa community in the Wa Municipality, for example, violence erupted leading to burning of a motor bike and injury to people. In fact, the 2004 Presidential results were declared without five constituencies' results when the Electoral Commissioner noted;

As a result of acts of vandalism, which occurred in certain constituencies after the 7th December, 2004 balloting, the results in those constituencies were slow in arriving at the head office for collation (Elections Report, 2005:50).

Generally, elections related violence and conflicts have the potential to turn a country into civil war with its attendant problems. Writing on Ghana's 2008 Elections, Asante (2008:11) states that, "the sad and ironic reality is that in an emerging democracy, elections still remain one of the most powerful events capable of derailing any democratic project and no young democracy should take them for granted". In such instances, democratic process become anti-developmental in outlook and hence the problem this research intends to investigate is *the obstacles militating against the electoral process in the Wa Central Constituency of the Upper West Region within the context of a multi-party state system in Ghana*.

In a multi-party system of democracy, the electoral process and how it is structured becomes the kingpin of a free, fair and transparent election. Obstructions in the electoral process will therefore normally tend to create problems of legitimacy of public office holders or elected representatives and thereby endanger the very principles of a democracy. In view of the above broad research question, sub-questions are specifically framed to capture the four main aspects of the electoral process (demarcation, registration, public education and conduct of elections) in order to help find answers to the main research question. There is, however, a fifth question that seeks to put together all the different issues and to suggest a way forward. This question forms the basis for which recommendations are made in the study. The questions are stated thus:

- What are the levels of stakeholders' involvement in the demarcation of electoral districts?

Electoral demarcation assigns people to electoral structures for participation in electoral activities. Inappropriate demarcation may persist for a long time and affected communities have to endure the problem. It is therefore crucial in electoral demarcation to involve major stakeholders so as to reduce problems associated with demarcation.

- What are the problems associated with the registration of voters?

The voters register determines the eligibility of people in election. As much as possible the register should capture the names of all qualified citizens to enable them participate in the election. In view of the important role the voters register plays; it should be acceptable to major stakeholders. However, there are always concerns from the opposition political parties about the credibility of the register for the elections.

- What are the factors that affect the conduct of elections and election outcomes?

Electoral victories in Africa have never been accepted without protest. Electoral losers have sought legal redress in the law courts while others violently protested elections results. Dispute in electoral results cast doubt on the legitimacy of the candidates or the ruling government.

- What is the extent of public knowledge with respect to the electoral process?

Effective participation in the electoral process depends on adequate knowledge of the electoral process and the choices available to voters. Electoral education is very crucial in Wa Central constituency where illiteracy is high and access to information is limited.

- What are the opportunities for enhancing the electoral process in the area?

Elections offer a smooth and peaceful way of determining how citizens are governed. Democracy and all the benefit it brings depends on credible and acceptable elections.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

2.1. Democracy as a Form of Governance

Democracy should be a celebration of an involved public. Democracy requires an active citizenry because it is through discussion, popular interest, and involvement in politics that societal goals should be defined and carried out. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force (Dalton, 2013).

For a system of government to be considered democratic, it must combine three essential conditions: meaningful *competition* for political power amongst individuals and organized groups; inclusive *participation* in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through free and fair elections; and a level of *civil and political liberties* sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation. Participation and contestation are crucial: while democracy can take many forms, no system can be called democratic without a meaningful level of both (Harris and Reilly, 1998). Democracy, as a theoretical concept, has long been the subject of deliberation, debate and dreams. The way in which democracy is defined speaks not only of the nature of government, elections and power, but also of the nature of society, community and humanity. In the political philosophy of more recent centuries, the concept of democracy has evolved through many incarnations. It has been used as the basis for a utopian society, a means to protect citizens from government, a tool for the advancement of human development, a form of free-market politics, and a way to ensure stability in a pluralist society. Democratic theory has envisioned humankind as a project, as consumers, and as a danger to peace and good order. Ongoing theoretical thought and the efforts of various democratizing groups continue to keep the long-standing questions of the very nature of democracy and politics at the forefront of the debate. Viewed strictly as a tool or mechanism, representative democracy is defined only as a system of government in which people vote in order to select those who will determine policy and act as their political leaders. The act of voting provides all citizens with a direct interest in the actions of their government, an opportunity to participate and also to inform themselves and others. The results of the vote give those elected the entitlement to govern—or to oppose and oversee those who govern—until the next election, and the responsibility to decide political issues on the behalf of their constituents. Voting becomes the key form of interaction between those elected and the ordinary citizens, it provides the fundamental foundation for the operation of the rest of the democratic system, and it provides great symbolic value.

If voting turnout declines, the primary link between the citizen and the system is diminished, government actions are less likely to correspond with the desires of the citizens, and, on a larger scale, the legitimacy of the democratic system may be undermined. Some theorists, however, contend that this common form of late-20th century democracy has emerged as something of a paradox—universal suffrage ensuring political equality within a system of society that emphasizes individual rights and an economy that retains very real inequalities of class, opportunity and affluence. This form of democracy, they contend, is the very cause of the crisis exposed by widespread voter alienation and falling voter turnout. Some writers and some participants in democracy- building processes contend that, rather than just being an instrument of control or influence, politics must be viewed as a way of living and social decision making. Democracy thus becomes a moral concept - a way of life. Political participation also needs to be expressive, allowing a citizen to feel a part of the process. In this view, democratic participation is conceived of as a vehicle to build both citizenship and community. Substantial citizen participation in government decision making- or rather a form of direct democracy—is necessary in order to achieve a more equitable and humane society. Despite their differences, all theories of democracy maintain a place for voting as a fundamental component. Elections remain the primary basis of public influence within representative democracy, provide a form of collective decision making as to who manages the affairs of government and who oversees them doing so, and provide some degree of popular control over elected politicians. Referendums and citizens' initiatives enable direct involvement in popular decision making, with both advantages and disadvantages, and depend on the participation of citizens through voting as elections do. As a form of political participation, voting generally remains the easiest and the one that most commonly engages majorities of citizens. Given this, the reasons why people appear to be increasingly willing to abstain from voting remain far from totally explained (Ellis, Gratschew, Pammett, & Thiessen, 2006).

According to the United State department of state's bureau of international information publication, democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative. In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people—in a community organization or tribal council, for example, or the local unit of a labor union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote (Clack, Neely, Malamud, & Strum, 2007).

Modern society, with its size and complexity, offers few opportunities for direct democracy. Most communities have grown too large for all the residents to gather in a single location and vote directly on issues that affect their lives (Curran and Nichols: 2005). Today, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town of 50,000 or nations of 50 million, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programs for the public good. In the name of the people, such officials can deliberate on complex public issues in a thoughtful and systematic manner that requires an investment of time and energy that is often impractical for the vast majority of private citizens.

How such officials are elected can vary enormously between countries. On the national level, for example, legislators can be chosen from districts (constituencies) that each elects a single representative. Alternatively, under a system of proportional representation, each political party is represented in the legislature according to its percentage of the total vote nationwide (Pandey, 2005). Provincial and local elections can mirror these national models, or choose their representatives more informally through group consensus instead of elections. Whatever the method used, public officials in a representative democracy hold office in the name of the people and remain accountable to the people for their actions.

All democracies are systems in which citizens freely make political decisions by majority rule (ibid). But rule by the majority is not necessarily democratic: No one, for example, would call a system fair or just that permitted 51 percent of the population to oppress the remaining 49 percent in the name of the majority. In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of minorities—whether ethnic, religious, or political, or simply the losers in the debate over a piece of controversial legislation. The rights of minorities do not depend upon the goodwill of the majority and cannot be eliminated by majority vote. The rights of minorities are protected because democratic laws and institutions protect the rights of all citizens (Clack et.al., 2007).

Elections are the central institution of democratic representative governments. This is because, in a democracy, the authority of the government derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating that consent into governmental authority is the holding of free and fair elections.

All modern democracies hold elections, but not all elections are democratic. Right-wing dictatorships, Marxist regimes, and single-party governments also stage elections to give their rule the aura of legitimacy. In such elections, there may be only one candidate or a list of candidates, with no alternative choices. Such elections may offer several candidates for each office, but ensure through intimidation or rigging that only the government-approved candidate is chosen. Other elections may offer genuine choices—but only within the incumbent party. In the view of Clack et.al. (2007) these are not democratic elections.

2.2. Elections and a Multi-Party Democratic System

An election is a contest for legitimate power that can be described as a non-violent competition, fought within a political forum. It is important in this context to recognize that elections do not avoid confrontation, but rather, focus on its management and containment within accepted boundaries.

In practice, the assurance of equitable security during an electoral process is essential to retaining the participants' confidence and commitment to an election. Consequently, security is both integral to the goal of an election and an inseparable part of the electoral process.

There is no single model of elections or democracy that is universally applicable to all countries. An election is unique – defined not only by the electoral rules, but also shaped by the social values, politics, religions, history and culture of the people. In the same way, the security of an election is unique to the circumstances in which it is conducted. The stakes of any given election are different – even if it is held periodically in the same country – due to the changing forces that shape the national interest and corresponding political agenda.

Similar to a sporting event, the rivalry between opposing teams entails competition within an accepted set of rules, but does not allow for the use of violence to seek victory. Extending on this comparison, if violence does occur, it can lead to the disqualification of players (candidates), teams (political parties), an amendment of the results or the abandonment of the competition altogether. As such, the emergence of electoral violence is not a result of the process being followed, but signals a critical departure from the accepted rules that govern the process (Dunne, 2006).

According to Clack et al.(2007)democratic elections are not merely symbolic, but they are also competitive, periodic, inclusive, definitive elections in which the chief decision-makers in a government are selected by citizens who enjoy broad freedom to criticize government, to publish their criticism and to present alternatives for a way forward. This definition certainly comes with a lot of implications. First of all, opposition parties and candidates must enjoy the freedom of speech, assembly, and movement necessary to voice their criticisms of the government openly and to bring alternative policies and candidates to the voters. Simply permitting the opposition access to the ballot is not enough. Elections in which the opposition is barred from the airwaves, has its rallies harassed or its newspapers censored, are not democratic. The party in power may enjoy the advantages of incumbency, but the rules and conduct of the election contest must be fair.

Secondly, democratic elections are periodic in that they do not elect dictators or presidents-for-life. Elected officials are accountable to the people, and they must return to the voters at prescribed intervals to seek their mandate to continue in office. This means that officials in a democracy must accept the risk of being voted out of office. The one exception is judges who, to insulate them against popular pressure and help ensure their impartiality, may be appointed for life and removed only for serious improprieties.

The third issue has to deal with inclusiveness in a democratic system where elections are held. The definition of citizen and voter must be large enough to include a large proportion of the adult population. A government chosen by a small, exclusive group is not a democracy—no matter how democratic its internal workings may appear. One of the great dramas of democracy throughout history has been the struggle of excluded groups—whether racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, or women—to win full citizenship, and with it the right to vote and hold office. In Ghana, the 1992 Constitution has placed the voting age for all who qualify under the electoral laws at eighteen (18) years.

Additionally, democratic elections determine the leadership of the government. Subject to the laws and constitution of the country, popularly elected representatives hold the reins of power. They are not simply figureheads or symbolic leaders.

Finally, democratic elections are not limited to selecting candidates. Voters can also be asked to decide policy issues directly through referendums and initiatives that are placed on the ballot.

2.3. The Electoral System in Ghana

Electoral System consists of laws, rights, institutions, processes and formulas relevant to the preparation and conduct of elections and the declaration of results. Ghana's Election System has the following basic characteristics;

- Universal adult suffrage for citizens who are 18 years or older (it used to be 21 years up to the advent of the 2nd Republic)
- Official registration of voters
- Non-compulsory registration or voting
- Secret Ballot
- Use of voter I.D Card issue by the Electoral Commission to establish voters' identity
- Registration of political parties as a corporate bodies
- Political parties are not allowed to sponsor candidates for election to district assemblies' lower local government units
- Presidential election where the winner requires more than 50% of valid votes cast
- Parliamentary and local elections on the basis of the first-past-the post
- A run-off election in case no winner emerges on the first ballot
- No minimum voter turn-out requires for presidential/parliamentary
- Use of indelible ink (electoral stain) to prevent multiply voting
- A permanent Electoral Commission (Elections 2008:2).

These are used to guide the conduct and promote the legitimacy of the electoral process.

2.4. The Electoral Process in Ghana

Electoral process by definition is a seamless process covering a period that is much longer than a day or two. It starts from the consideration of whether the existing demarcation of constituencies is fair on population grounds through registration of new voters or ensuring that the current voter's register is accurate to the conduct of the election campaigns, casting and counting of votes and the declaration of results (Ayee, 2000). Ghana's electoral process which forms the basis for ensuring proper management of elections both at the local and national levels involves demarcation, registration, public education and the conduct of the election among others. This section examines each of the four (4) major steps in the electoral process.

2.4.1. Demarcation

The process of putting in place electoral structures (constituencies, electoral areas, units and polling stations) for national and local elections is called demarcation. It is opined that in election administration, demarcation of boundaries should precede all electoral processes in order to determine the reference points or landmarks for the registration of voters and facilitate the registration of people within predetermined polling areas (Electoral Commission, 2008). Demarcation facilitates the development of a computer file of addresses or locations to facilitate the preparation of voters' registers for polling areas by the body responsible. It has been observed that demarcation of electoral boundaries has direct consequence on the outcome of elections and must be handled by a body that is competent and independent. The guiding principles for demarcating electoral boundaries in Ghana are shown in Box 1.

➤ Box 1: General Principles Guiding Demarcation of Electoral Boundaries

There are certain fundamental guiding principles on demarcation. These are;

-No electoral district should fall in more than one administrative district

-Each electoral district should have population as equal as possible to the predetermined population quota.

-Certain specific factors such as existing traditional boundaries, barriers to transportation and communication and the distribution of different ethnic or language communities may be taken into account.

-However for administrative convenience these special factors may be ignored.

In addition to the above principles the following factors are also considered important in electoral demarcation;

-impartiality; the body authorize to carry out the demarcation should be non-partisan independent, and professional

-Equality; the population of constituencies should be as equal as possible as to provide voter with equality of voting strength.

-Representation; cohesive communities, administrative boundaries, geographic features, communities interest should be considered in undertaken demarcation.

-Non discrimination; no electoral manipulation

-transparency; the process should be transparent and accessible to the public as possible (IFES, 2007).

The division of a country into electoral boundaries is a complex and very sensitive issue. It is important that electoral demarcation is done impartially and devoid of political influence to avoid gerrymandering—drawing boundaries to favor political interest. In Ghana, the legal framework guiding demarcation is the 1992 Constitution, The Representation of The People Law, 1992 (P.N.D.C.L.284) and the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462). One main functions of the Electoral Commission as spelled out in Article 45 of the constitution is: “to demarcate the electoral boundaries for both nation and local government elections.”

Article 47 further states that Ghana shall be divided into many constituencies for the purpose of election of members of parliament as the Electoral Commission may prescribe, and each constituency shall be represented by one Member of Parliament. The constitution also mandates the Electoral Commission to review the electoral boundaries at an interval of not less than seven years or within twelve months after the publication of the enumeration figures after the holding of a census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier, and may as a result, alter the constituencies. The Representation of the People Law (P.N.D.C.L.284) also states that the boundaries of

each constituency shall not fall into more than one region. Damoah-Agyeman (2001) asserts that politicians, chiefs and the media need to understand rules relating to the creation of new electoral areas by noting that the constitutional provision mandating the Commission to create electoral boundaries for both national and local government elections states:

The number of inhabitants of the constituency should be nearly equal to the population quota and this quota should also be considered with communication, geographical features, population density, area and boundaries.

Since population density varies from place to place, if population alone is used to determine constituencies' boundaries, there will not be a fair representation of the people. Land size must also be considered among other factors. The criteria for demarcating electoral boundaries for both national and local government elections with respect to local government administrative areas include the need to decentralize to bring administration closer to the people and the presence of active groups that could be relied upon for the initial capitalization of the administration through taxation. Other factors are economic viability, availability of trained personnel and an administrative center and the availability of basic infrastructure that support schools, daily markets, health facilities and other government agencies at the chosen center.

The process of demarcation, generally, involves delimitation and delineation of boundaries. Delimitation involves the description of the determined boundaries on paper. When the boundaries so delimited are drawn on a map the area is said to be delineated. Delimitation of electoral districts is a fairly recent phenomenon. Prior to the nineteenth century, the composition of legislatures reflected the view that distinct categories of society such as towns, the clergy, and the nobility should be represented and not individual citizens. This view of representation led to legislatures based on subdivisions that varied greatly with regard to the size of population being represented (Handley, 2006). The term "boundary delimitation" usually refers to the process of drawing electoral district boundaries. However, it can also be used to denote the process of drawing voting areas (also called polling areas, districts or election precincts) for the purposes of assigning voters to polling places. It has also been employed to describe the process of demarcating administrative boundaries such as state, county or municipality lines.

According to the 2009 Participants Manual of the Joint Workshop on Effective Electoral Assistance, the periodic delimitation of electoral boundaries, or redistricting, is necessary in any representative system where single-member districts or uniformly small multimember districts are used. Adjusting district boundaries can have major consequences not only for the legislators who represent the districts, but also for the individual and community constituents of the districts. Ultimately, election results and the composition of the legislature are affected by the selection of district boundaries. But the importance of the redistricting process is seldom recognized outside of political circles. If electoral boundaries are not periodically adjusted, population inequities develop across districts. Electoral boundaries should not be drawn in a manner that discriminates against any particular minority group. For example, dividing a geographically-concentrated minority group among several electoral districts so that the group constitutes a minority of the voters in every single electoral district should be prohibited. Of course, electoral systems that rely exclusively on single-member districts cannot guarantee even some minimal percentage of seats for minority groups or minority political parties in the population. However, this fact should not open the door to active discrimination against a given minority group (EC-UNDP-IDEA, 2009).

2.4.2. Registration

Voter registration is arguably the most crucial and expensive component of an electoral process and the one to which the sustainability studies of the most advanced electoral administrations are increasingly turning their attention. Voter registration is the activity directed at the identification of those citizens who are eligible to vote in a given election. It is generally aimed at the production of lists and of a register of voters based on the eligibility rules in force in a given country. If conducted well, voter registration confers legitimacy on the process. If the registration system is flawed, the entire process may be perceived as illegitimate (EC-UNDP-IDEA, 2009)

According to Afari-Gyan (1999), part of the preparation toward the elections in Ghana is always to revise or clean and update the voters register. To achieve this, the activities normally involve removal of deceased names from the register and placing on the register the names of persons who have recently attained voting age of 18 years or who are older but have not registered for one reason or the other. It also offers an opportunity to people who have moved residence to change polling stations. These measures greatly enhance voter identification and prevent impersonation' during the conduct of the election. Within Ghana's electoral system, registration involves the taking of personal information of all applicants on a scannable form for further processing at the EC Head Office into a provisional register.

There are two types of registrations normally undertaken by the EC, notably, general registration and limited registration. General registration on the one hand involves every eligible voter. Limited registration on the hand deals with individuals who have turned 18 years after the general registration and also older Ghanaians who could not register during the general registration. Generally, the purpose of registration is not only to produce a list of qualified voters in the voters' register, but also it is normally intended to settle challenges and objections in the process.

The preparations for registration include recruitment of registration officials, training of officials, actual registration which takes place for a period determined by the EC, revision of the voters' register, usually to be undertaken in every two (2) years interval and exhibition of voters' register.

2.4.3. Public Education

There is always the need to run campaigns to provide citizens with basic information about electoral process and the political system. This is particularly so in poorer countries where the need for such information is most obvious. At the same time, however, these information campaigns may not be very intense, as suggested by the fact that they are often confined to the election period. In Ghana,

public education is a sine qua non for all election related issues because it creates the platform for people in the political process to get information and seek clarifications on all matters connected either directly or indirectly to the electoral process. Without the proper understanding of the electoral laws, rules and regulations guiding the electoral process, there is bound to be credibility problems and hence issues of legitimacy are at risk of being flawed. Karikari (2000) observed that Ghana's multi-party democracy can only flourish if every potential voter including the illiterate rural dweller is given enough information to enable them make free, fair and informed choices in Ghana. In the Ghanaian context this is made the more important at the local level where there are no avenues for obtaining information on crucial issues from organized political groups because electoral choices are supposed to be based on 'non-partisanship' (Amponsah, 2003)

Public education does not only create awareness about the process of drawing new electoral boundaries but also provides information to the public on where to direct petitions from the public on demarcation of new electoral areas. People may hold the erroneously impression that the creation of new districts or constituencies would accelerate the development of the area without due consideration to constitutional procedures. An assessment of requests for the creation of new constituencies, districts or electoral areas are based on constitutional provisions (Damoah-Agyeman, 2001). This erroneous impression was observed after the EC assessed the petitions and memoranda relating to the creation of new electoral constituencies prior to the 2004 Elections which it concluded that most were not been properly packaged. Thus, the sensitisation programmes offer opportunities for communities to conform to the formalities involved during their preparation of petitions and memoranda to request for new constituencies, districts or electoral areas.

2.4.4. Conduct of the Election

A crucial stage in the Election process is the conduct of the election. In Ghana, the processes for the conduct of an election as provided by Constitutional Instrument (C.I) 15 involves the writ, notice of election, nomination, notice of nomination, notice of poll, recruitment and training of election officials, transfer of voters, proxy voting, special voting, voting, counting of votes and declaration. The C.I 15 provides that:

For the purpose of a general election, the Commission shall issue a writ of election to the returning officer. The writ shall be in such form as the Commission may determine and shall specify a) the period and place for the nomination of candidates; and b) the day on which the poll is to be taken. (...) [A notice of election]...shall specify the day, the place and the time for the nomination of candidates and the day when the poll is to be taken.

The Returning Officers (RO) and also the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) are individuals appointed by the EC to be responsible for the conduct and supervision of the Presidential and parliamentary elections in one constituency, under the direction of the District Electoral Officer (DEO) and the EC. Following the issuance of the writ and a notice of elections, nominations are then opened and notice of nominations effected thereafter. The former refers to the filing of the nomination of candidates whereas the latter is a poster that depicts the candidate, the proposer, the seconder and supporters of the nomination. For parliamentary election, a proposer, a seconder and 18 supporters are required. In the case of the Presidential 2 supporters from each administrative district in the country are required. When the processes of nominations are completed, the EC then issues a notice of poll. The C.I states that a notice of poll shall a) states the day on which and the time at which the poll is to be taken, and b) the full name and pictures or symbol or colours of the candidate nominated for the election. These activities so described lay the stage for the elections of representatives to take place.

The preparations for the conduct of the poll on polling day begin with the recruitment and training of election officials. Here, qualified or suitable persons are identified to man the various polling stations as temporal staff of the EC. The EC also allows time for transfer of voters. Voter transfer is normally undertaken by the EC to enable voters who had relocated since the last registration exercise to undertake the necessary transfer procedures so that they would be able to vote on Election Day. For the 2008 Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, CODEO Field Observers [FOs] noted that the exercise was well patronized and peaceful in all constituencies. This notwithstanding, the FOs reported alleged cases of individual candidates and political parties facilitating bulk transfer and the busing of their supporters to swing constituencies, ostensibly, to enhance their chances of winning the elections. The partisan tension about alleged improper busing of supporters to the various EC offices sometimes resulted in party agents challenging and preventing the transfer of votes culminating in violence in some EC district offices or in the communities. For example, in the Fanteakwa constituency in the Eastern Region, a busload of students from the Osino Secondary School was prevented from entering the district EC office to transfer their votes. According to the agents of the NDC, these people were not students but NPP supporters who were being bused to the constituency. To qualify as a transfer voter, a voter might have stayed at his/her new location for a period of not less than two months.

One crucial moment of every electoral process is the day of the poll. Prior to this day, however, Ghana's electoral laws provide that people can vote by proxy or do special voting. Proxy voting is undertaken whereby voters who because of ill health or absence from their constituency will be unable to present themselves for voting on the polling day and as such may appoint somebody to vote on his/her behalf. Special voting, however, is a process which allows people who because of his duties on polling day will be unable to be present to vote on a special day set aside for such people by the EC. Voting is the process whereby registered voters go to cast their ballots at a polling station. At the close of the poll, counting of the votes is done in order to declare a winner at the polling station level. The law stipulates that:

"immediately after the close of the poll, the presiding officer shall, in the presence of the candidates or their representatives and counting agents-a) open each ballot box, take out all the ballot papers in the box-b) proceed to count the ballot papers at the polling station and- c) record the total number of votes cast in favor of each candidate (C.I 15)"

The law further states that after the results of the poll for all the stations in the constituency has been given, the returning officer shall in the presence of the candidates or their representatives publicly declare to be elected in a parliamentary election the candidate to whom the most votes has been given and in the case of the president, the chairman of the Commission will declare the candidate who received more than 50% of the valid votes cast to be the President.

2.5. Multi-Party Democracy and the Electoral Process

Multi-Party democracies allow for divergent political opinions to thrive. This gives room to the electorate to evaluate the different opinions and to make informed choices by electing their representatives into government. It is important that the process that feeds the multi-party system gained legitimacy by being open and transparent at every stage of the process. Figure 1 depicts a somewhat hierarchical structure of Ghana’s electoral process.

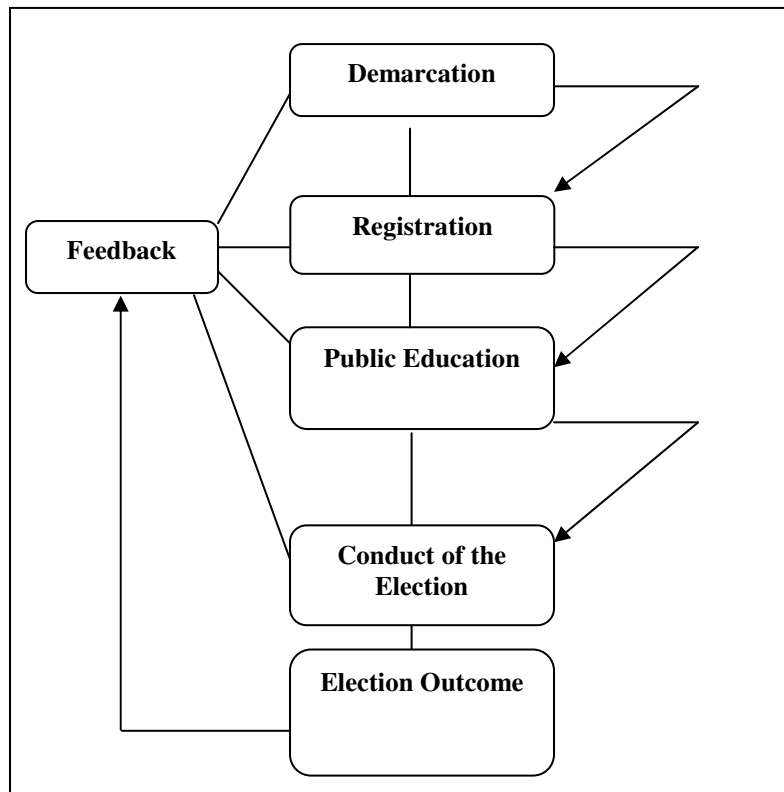


Figure 1: Ghana’s Electoral Process
 Source: Author’s Construct, 2009

From above, it must be mentioned that the framework for organizing elections in Ghana as portrayed is only demonstrative rather than a mere logical flow of steps or process. Usually, some of the stages overlap and may occur at the beginning of the process or between different stages of the electoral process. For example, public education within the process is always an on-going thing and therefore can precede processes of demarcation, registration and the conduct of an election. In figure 2, the idea is not to stress the sequential nature of the stages of the different stages involved in the entire electoral process, but to form the basis for an argument that poor execution of the process at each stage can badly affect the entire process especially during the conduct of the election where emotions are often charged. The vise-versa is equally true. Although vanquished parties or groups can sometimes get discontented and try to raise issues, such matters are normally at levels that can be managed. Admittedly, if disputes are not properly managed especially when this is consistent and over a long period of time, they can build up some pent-up feelings with the potential to degenerate into violent and large scale conflict in the longer term if the process does not take steps to address it. This study seeks to posit that complaints and lessons learnt in every post-election era must serve as feed back into the process so as to address election related discrepancies or anomalies in the next future election.

Experiences in Ghana point to the fact that issues of registration of voters and the conduct of the election itself rather than those of demarcation may be difficult to offset and correct within successive elections. Administrative boundaries and electoral boundaries are more permanent in nature and will always require some legal basis to change. It does go without saying that when problems in an electoral process become rooted on issues demarcated boundaries, then, they may persist for a relatively long time or may exist forever as part of a residual challenge borne by the process itself.

From the discussions above, it is clear that the issue of public education occupies a center stage in the entire electoral process. Thus, a more cogent construct of Ghana’s electoral process from a practical standpoint may be illustrated as shown in figure 2.

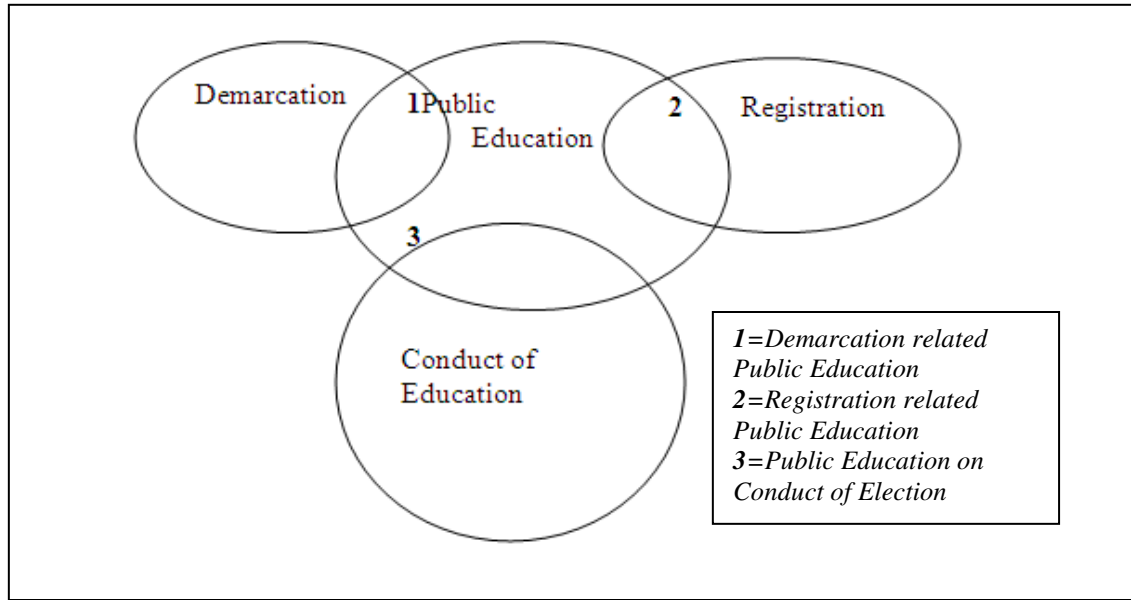


Figure 2: The Role of Public Education in the Electoral Process
Source: Author's Construct, 2009

Public education, generally, plays a very crucial role in the electoral process. Although some elections can result in various degrees of violence, the process often could have been more chaotic without inputs into the process of public education. Thus, public education may be viewed as link factor in the electoral processes which provides a platform for the effective collation of views from different interest groups, provide information and sensitize actors on what is and what is not required in the process and dissemination of all other relevant information to the public on issues of demarcation of boundaries, registration of voters and the conduct of the election. Public education may relate to the civic rights and responsibilities of the citizens in the electoral process. It may also be directly or indirectly related to the EC and therefore others stakeholders can get involved to do public education. Apart from it broader outlook, public education can be targeted at specific issues on demarcation, registration and conduct of election. From figure 2, seven (7) different constellations may be envisaged in the electoral process of Ghana. The first four of these constellations notably, demarcation, registration, public education and conduct of election may be viewed broadly as core components of the electoral process with general information needs which the commission must provide in accordance with law. Such information needs to be packaged in the form that would eventually make the process legitimate.

2.6. Structures for Organizing Elections in Ghana

To facilitate the organization of national and local level elections in Ghana, certain structures have to be put in place. These are constituencies, electoral areas, units and polling stations.

2.6.1. Constituencies

A constituency is the largest political unit with an elected representative to the legislative arm of government. Currently there are two hundred and seventy-five (275) constituencies distributed proportionally among the ten (10) Regions. Constituencies are for the election of the people's representatives to Parliament.

The Upper West Region currently has eleven (11) constituencies namely, Wa West, Wa Central, Wa East, Nadowli-Kaleo, Daffiamah-Busie-Issa, Jirapa, Lambussie-Karni, Sissala East, Sissala West and Lawra and Nandom. As a result of the 2000 and 2010 Population Census data and other socio-cultural factors, four (4) and two (2) new districts respectively have been created. These districts are Wa West district with Wechiau as its capital; Wa East district with Funsu as the district capital, Sissala West district with Gwollu as the district capital and Lambussie-Karni with Lambussie as the district capital. The two are Daffiamah-Busie-Issa with Issa as the district capital and Nandom district with Nandom as the capital. With the exception of Nadowli district which previously consisted of two constituencies and Lawra district which has been demarcated to form Nandom district, all the other constituencies in the region are coterminus with the respective districts or political administrative boundaries.

2.6.2. Electoral Areas

About six thousand, one hundred and fifty-six (6,156) electoral areas are also distributed among the two hundred and sixteen (216) Districts of the Country. The Upper West Region has eleven (11) districts with a total of two hundred and ninety-three (293) electoral areas. Wa Municipal Assembly has thirty-one (31) electoral areas. Electoral Areas are for electing the people's representatives to the District Assemblies.

2.6.3. Units

Like the electoral areas, the Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 1967 made the unit committee coterminous with the electoral area. There are about six thousand, one hundred and fifty-six (6,156) units areas in the country out of which the Upper West Region has two hundred and ninety-three (293) units and Wa Municipality has thirty-one (31) units. Units are designed to fit into the Electoral areas and are for the election of the people's representatives to Unit Committees.

2.6.4. Polling Stations

Currently there are twenty-six thousand and two (26,002) Polling stations in the country. There are nine hundred and fifty-one (951) polling stations in the region and one hundred and thirty-seven (137) polling stations in the Wa Municipality. The polling stations are the places where voters go to register and cast vote on Election Day. Voters are assigned to these polling stations permanently. This has resulted from the principle that "where you register is where you vote". Polling stations are designed to fit into the Units.

2.7. Responsibilities of the Electoral Commission in the Electoral Process

The 1992 Constitution mandates the EC as the sole independent body to be responsible for all matters leading to the conduct of both local and national elections by ensuring a fair representation of the citizenry in accordance with the law. According to the law, the EC shall at the request of the President reviews areas of authority of unit committees, town, area, zonal, urban and sub-metropolitan District Councils and district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies and make such recommendations as it consider appropriate to the President.

The EC's responsibilities in the conduct of elections consist of three essential elements. Delivering a speech on the topic 'preparation for free and fair elections' at the 51 Annual New Schools at Winneba, the Chairman of EC stated the responsibilities of the EC as well as other bodies as follow. The first responsibility of the EC is to apply the election laws fairly across the board, without discrimination as to candidate or party. Generally, the role of the EC in the making of the election laws is minimal. The Constitution empowers the Commission to make regulations, which have the effect of law. But in the matter of elections, there is a clear hierarchy of laws with the Constitution's provisions at the top, statutory provisions in the middle and regulations made by the EC at the bottom. So the regulations are third order laws, made for administrative purposes for the efficient performance of the Commission's functions under the constitution or a statute. As such, any regulation made by the Commission is null and void on its face if it is in conflict with a provision of the constitution or a statute. It therefore means that the EC's responsibility lies more in the application, rather than the making, of the election laws.

The second area of the EC's responsibility is to put in place a transparent framework of procedures and processes for the conduct of elections. It is an evolutionary process, whereby the framework is improved and refined in the light of past experiences. Since the transitional elections in 1992 up to date, the EC has introduced some far reaching measures to achieve greater transparency in the conduct of elections in this country.

In 1995 the EC replaced the contentious voters register used for the 1992 elections with a new one which was compiled in close collaboration with the political parties. Every registered voter was given a card with a unique number to facilitate voter identification. Also, against the backdrop of widespread allegations of the pre-stuffing of the opaque ballot boxes before actual voting began in the 1992 elections the Commission has been using transparent ballot boxes since the 1996 elections.

In addition to the foregoing measures, the Commission has instituted representation of the political parties at key points in the election process as an essential component of election administration. For example, representatives of political parties are allowed, and even sometimes financially assisted through training and the payment of allowances, to observe the registration of voters and the printing and packaging of ballot papers. There is also the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), Regional Inter-party Advisory Committee (RIPAC) and District Inter-party Advisory Committee (DIPAC) through which representatives of the Commission and the political parties have, since 1994, been in continuous dialogue over the electoral system, even when no elections are pending. In this way, the two bodies are better able to appreciate each other's problems, discuss matters in a non-confrontational atmosphere and try to come to a consensus on important issues.

Before the 2000 elections, for example, the EC undertook activities to revise or clean and update the voters register in readiness for the elections. Essentially, this was intended to remove the names of dead people from the register and place on the register the names of persons who have recently attained the voting age of 18 years or who are older but have not registered for one reason or another. But there was also an opportunity for voters who have moved residence to change their polling stations. After the revision of the register was completed, the Commission took steps to replace all thumbprint voter ID cards with photo ID card in order to greatly enhance voter identification and prevent impersonation. In 2004, the EC compiled a new register which provided voters with photo ID cards as well as photos in the register for easy identification.

Finally, for a transparent election framework, the Election Day processes are firmly established and relatively well known to the citizenry. Apart from the fact that voting procedure is simple for all to understand and participate, voting also takes place in open view of the public and each candidate is allowed to appoint a representative to oversee his or her interest at each polling station. Additionally, the ballots are counted at each polling station and the results are there and then certified and publicly declared by the Presiding Officer and counter-signed by the candidates' agents. Each agent gets a copy of the signed results. According to the EC these measures combine transparency and verifiability because one can easily check on the authenticity of the results of any polling station.

The third area of the EC's responsibility is to educate the voters to be able to fully participate in the election process. Voter education is a sub-species of civic education. Civic education is any kind of education which enables or empowers a person to be a good and responsible citizen of his or her country and an active and qualitative participant in one's society. Voter education, on the other hand, relates specifically to the citizen's participation in elections. It involves publicity, the mechanics and modalities of participation in the voting and the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. Publicity is giving information to the electorate about upcoming electoral events, so that they are aware of them well ahead of time. Additionally, there is the need for people to be familiar with the mechanics or modalities of participating in a particular pending electoral event. The people are also educated about the electoral system and their rights and responsibilities in the successful execution of electoral events generally.

Undoubtedly, voter education is an important responsibility. While the publicity and the familiarization aspects may be achievable on a periodic basis, provided the right resources are available, educating the people about the electoral system and their rights and responsibilities is best done on a sustained basis, instead of for a few months to every election.

In order to reach the widest possible public, then there is need to widen the current circles of the involvement of other groups and bodies in the voter education effort. At the same time, we are also mindful of the need for caution in the matter; so that voter education is not turned into an electioneering campaign for some party or candidate. (Afari-Gyan 1999),

2.8. Responsibilities of other Bodies in Elections

Aside the responsibilities of the EC, candidates have a right to be nominated; to be treated fairly by the EC; and to freely campaign. But the candidates also have the responsibility, to conduct a clean, peaceful and civil campaign, devoid of any acts that would tend to undermine the election process or generally pollute the electioneering environment. For example, bribery, vote buying the use of abusive language in campaigning and resort to so-called "*machomen*" as a weapon of intimidation are contrary to the principles of free and fair elections and have no place in a democratic electioneering campaign.

Again, each candidate has a right to be represented at the polling station, and because he or she cannot be present at every polling station at the same time, it is entirely his or her responsibility to appoint competent people as agents. In this connection, the tendency to regard serving as a polling station agent for a candidate or a party when viewed as a job for the boys is not healthy for trustworthy elections. Instead of serving as agents, the current practice of the big men flipping from polling station to polling station on election day serves little, if any, useful purpose; because they can spend only a short time at each polling station. Perhaps, one way to free more capable persons to serve as candidates' agents will be to declare Election Day as a public holiday if it falls on a working day.

As already discussed, the voter has a right to electoral information, to cast his or her vote in complete secrecy without any form of interference, and to have the votes counted as cast. But the voter also has a duty to cast only one vote according to his or her conscience and allow other voters to freely do the same. This means that any person who encourages or colludes in multiple or underage registration; who sells his or her vote to the highest bidder; who votes or encourages somebody to vote in the name of another person, living or dead; who casts more than one vote; or who prevents another person from voting, cannot be said to want free and fair elections.

The media's right to information is a well-established principle which must be observed in a democracy. But, alongside that right, in a newly emerging democracy such as Ghana, the media, particularly the public media, have a responsibility towards the electorate and the candidates. In respect of the electorate, the media have both publicity and education functions. Their responsibilities should extend beyond informing the people about upcoming electoral events to educating them about the election process and the proper forms of their participation. In so far as the candidates are concerned, the media must accord them fair treatment in getting their messages across to the people. The EC observes that both the frequency and the quality of exposure in the media are important because the exposure can be positive or negative. Biased reporting about candidates is not only unfair in itself, but it also distorts the positions of the candidates on important issues and so does not help the electorate to make intelligent choices. (Afari-Gyan 1999),

2.9. Political participation in Wa Central Constituency

Participation in political activities in the Wa central constituency has always been keenly and acrimonious since the inception of the fourth republic. Although electoral results indicate that NDC had won elections in both presidential and parliamentary elections, other Political Parties have progressively increased their votes over the years. In 1992 five presidential candidates contested for the presidential election. Following the allegation by the opposition political parties that the voters' register was bloated; the opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary election which was to come off on later date. The only NDC parliamentary candidate was therefore declared unopposed.

| No. Presidential Candidates | No. Parliamentary Candidates | Year |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| 5 | 1 | 1992 |
| 3 | 5 | 1996 |
| 7 | 6 | 2000 |
| 4 | 6 | 2004 |
| 8 | 6 | 2008 |

Table 1: Presidential and Parliamentary Elections- Wa Central Constituency (1992 – 2008)

Source: Regional E.C, 2010

Table 1 indicates that elections in the Wa central constituency has always been competitive with the exception of 1992 parliamentary poll which the opposition parties boycotted. The 1996 elections witnessed three candidates for the presidential elections while five candidates contested for the parliamentary seat. Similarly, seven presidential candidates and six parliamentary candidates stood for the 2000 elections. In the 2004 general elections, four presidential and six parliamentary candidates contested for the elections, while the 2008 elections were contested by eight and six presidential and parliamentary candidates respectively.

3. Methodology

3.1. Profile of the Upper West Region in Ghana

3.1.1. Location and Land Area

The Upper West Region is located to the North Western corner of the country-Ghana. It lies between longitudes $1^{\circ} 25''$ W and $2^{\circ} 45''$ and latitudes $9^{\circ} 30''$ N and 11° N. Geographically, the region covers approximately 18,478 square kilometers. This constitutes about 12.7 per cent of the total land area of Ghana (GSS, 2005). As shown in Figure 3 the region is bordered on the North by the Republic of Burkina Faso, the East by Upper East Region, the South by Northern Region and the West by Cote d'Ivoire.

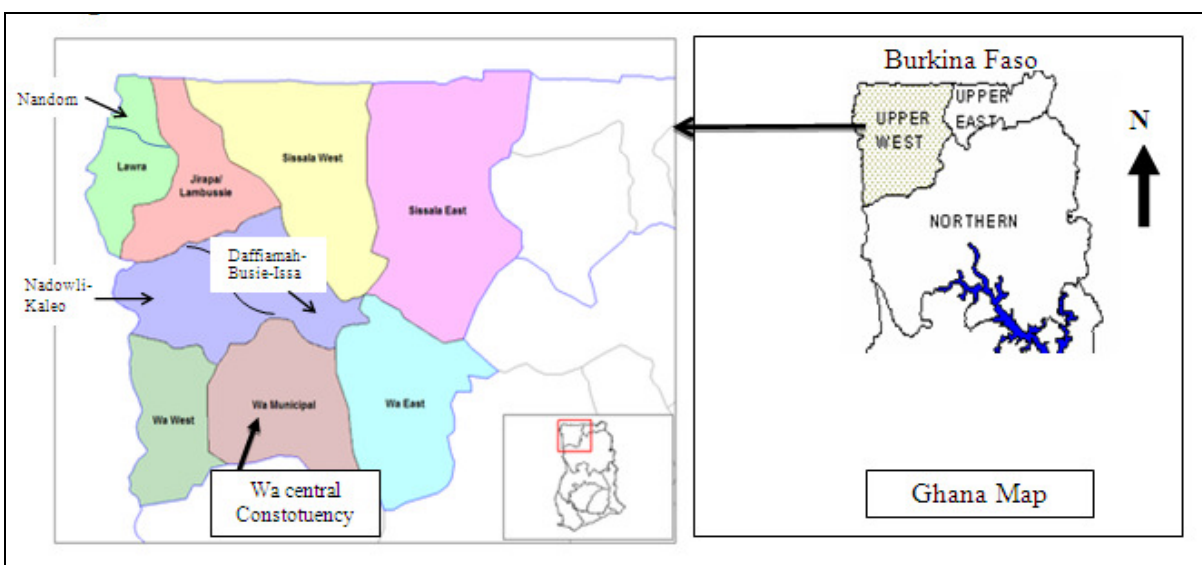


Figure 3: Map of the Upper West Region in Ghana with Wa Central constituency (Study area) in regional context.

Source: GSS, 2013

3.1.2. Description and Political administration of the Region

The Upper West Region, with Wa as the regional capital, was formerly part of the then Upper Region which was itself carved out of the Northern Region in July 1960. In pursuance of the decentralization policy, the Government, in 1983, divided the Upper Region into Upper East and Upper West. Like other regions in Ghana, the Regional Co-ordination Council (RCC), headed by the Regional Minister is at the apex of the political administration. Other members of the RCC include representatives from each District Assembly, regional heads of decentralized ministries, and members of the Regional House of Chiefs.

Currently, there are eleven (11) administrative districts, namely, Nadowli-Kaleo, Daffiamah-Busie-Issa, Jirapa, Lambussie-Kani, Lawra, Nandom, Wa-West, Wa-East, Sissala-East, Sissala-West and Wa Municipal in the Upper West Region. These administrative units are headed by Municipal/District Chief Executive and supported by state departments and agencies. With respect to elections, each district is under the direct supervision of a District Electoral Officer who is a staff of the Electoral Commission of Ghana. In addition, the districts are sub-divided into Zonal/Area/Town Councils, and Unit Committees which assist in the performance of key decentralized roles. Other stakeholders include the traditional leadership and Youth Development Associations to facilitate efficient and effective mobilization of local resources.

3.1.3. Description of the Study Area

The study focuses on Wa Central Constituency which is coterminous with the Wa Municipality. As shown in figure 3, the Wa Municipality is bordered to the north by the Nadowli District, to the east by Wa East District, to the West by Wa West District and to the South by both Wa East and West Districts. It lies within latitudes $1^{\circ}40'N$ to $2^{\circ}45'N$ and longitudes $9^{\circ}32'$ to $10^{\circ}20'W$. The landmass is approximately 23,474 square kilometres, which is about 6.4% of the total area of the Upper West Region (GSS, 2010).

Before the creation of Wa Municipality, the area was part of the former Wa district established by L.I.1433. It had 12 area council, 57 electoral areas, 210 units and 281 polling stations. The District also had two constituencies-Wa Central and Wa East. In 2003, following the President directive, the Commission made recommendation for the upgrading of the Wa township to a Municipality and

the creation of two additional Districts -Wa West and Wa East District. Thus the present Wa Municipality, which coincidentally is also Wa central Constituency, was established by Legislative Instrument (L.I.1800). The Jurisdiction of the Municipality includes five Zonal Councils namely, Wa, Busa, Kpongu, Boli, and Kperisi. There are 31 Electoral Areas, 54 units and 131 polling stations.

The major ethnic groups in Wa Municipality are the Wala and the Dagaaba. Other groups include the Lobi, Sissala, Akans, Ewes, Frafra and Gonja. As shown in Table 2, the data of the 2000 Population and Housing Census indicates that the population of the Wa Municipality is 105, 065. This figure consists of 51,051 (or 48.6%) male and 54, 014 (or 51.4%) female (GSS, 2010).

3.1.4. Distribution of the Voter Population

By year 2010 when study was conducted, the Electoral Commission (EC) had undertaken three general registrations since 1989 and several voters' revision exercises including five general elections. As part of the preparations toward the return to democratic regime, a voters' register was compiled in 1989 and used for 1992 general elections.

Following the complaint from the opposition parties that the register was bloated and the subsequent boycott of the parliamentary elections that year, the EC compiled a new register in 1995. This register was used for 1996 general elections, 1998 district level elections, 2000 general elections and 2002 district level elections. The current register was compiled in 2004 and updated in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. Generally, it has more or less become a convention for the EC to compile a new register after every two successive general elections. In 2004 the voter population was 50,503

| Electoral Areas | Voter Population | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 |
| Busa | 1887 | 1978 | 2334 | 2568 | 2632 |
| Kpongu | 1102 | 1188 | 1514 | 1747 | 1830 |
| Dandafuro | 706 | 762 | 922 | 1000 | 928 |
| Kabanye | 4342 | 4564 | 5213 | 5921 | 4647 |
| Gov't Residential Area | 1139 | 1278 | 1637 | 1974 | 1601 |
| Nayiri/Limanyiri | 4354 | 4493 | 5338 | 3731 | 3547 |
| Fifamuni* | | | | 2012 | 1942 |
| Tagirayiri | 3809 | 3928 | 4516 | 2475 | 2536 |
| Community Center* | | | | 2363 | 2473 |
| Dondoli | 2973 | 3169 | 3654 | 3891 | 4007 |
| Fongu | 2675 | 6289 | 3747 | 2601 | 1980 |
| Kumbiehi* | | | | 1618 | 2513 |
| Dobile | 5961 | 6289 | 7772 | 5578 | 5218 |
| Dokpong* | | | | 2992 | 3042 |
| Kambali | | | | 3467 | 3664 |
| Kpaguri* | | | | 1437 | 1469 |
| Nakore/Chansa* | 5977 | 6202 | 7572 | 1285 | 1681 |
| Mangu* | | | | 1278 | 1898 |
| Sombo* | | | | 794 | 2086 |
| Kunta | 2558 | 2717 | 3443 | 2651 | 2960 |
| Bamahu* | | | | 1413 | 3699 |
| Charia | 1739 | 1845 | 2333 | 1860 | 2042 |
| Jingu* | | | | 611 | 993 |
| Kperisi | 2121 | 2269 | 2583 | 1805 | 1903 |
| Guli* | | | | 1094 | 1387 |
| Jonga | 1602 | 1681 | 1948 | 1113 | 1304 |
| Yibile* | | | | 959 | 941 |
| Zongo | 4635 | 4766 | 5553 | 3052 | 3084 |
| Sokpayiri* | | | | 2896 | 3112 |
| Boli | 2923 | 3078 | 3529 | 2058 | 2067 |
| Sing* | | | | 1781 | 1944 |
| Total | 50,503 | 53,041 | 63,608 | 70,027 | 75,130 |

Table 2: Electoral Areas and Voter Population in Wa Central Constituency (2004-2012)

Source: Regional Office of the EC, Wa (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012)

[* New Electoral Areas carved in 2010 recently updated & not part during data collection in 2008]

An exercise to revise the voters' register was undertaken in 2006 before the District Assembly Elections, and this increased the voter population to 53,041. The register was revised again in 2008, 2010 and 2012 and this put the total registered voters at 63,608, 70,027

and 75,130 respectively. For Wa Municipality, the voter distribution by electoral areas since 2004 when the current register was compiled is represented in table 2.

3.2. Study Design and Population Selection

The study was descriptive and collected cross sectional data between 2009 and 2010 in six (6) communities, namely, Limanyiri, Dondoli, Kambale, Charia, Kpongo and Busa. The choice of these communities was based on a number of considerations which also informed the need for the study. Since Wa Central Constituency consists of two main ethnic groups—Dagaaba and Wala—Charia which is a predominantly Dagaaba settlement was particularly chosen for two main reasons—first, to cater for the views of the Dagaaba group in the study and second, because a particular candidate persistently emerged from this community to contest most, if not all the general elections since 1996 and always lost to others of Wala background. Another consideration was to cater for both rural and urban sentiments that border on the electoral process. Thus, the choice of Kpongo and Busa in addition to Charia was to account for largely rural perspective on the electoral process whereas Kambali, Dondoli and Liman-yiri were also chosen within the municipality to account for urban perspectives. Additionally, these locations have all registered varied incidences on the different stages of the electoral process at one point in time or the other and hence were viewed as communities that would reflect the specific cases especially on demarcation, registration and the conduct of elections in the constituency.

In each of the communities, individual registered voters, groups of community members and sometimes traditional authorities or opinion leaders were contacted and interviewed using various methods and techniques. Since the electoral process goes beyond community people to include other stakeholders and key players, the staff of the EC, security services, NCCE, political parties, Candidates and elected representative as well as election officials were equally targeted and interviewed. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.2.1. Purposive Sampling

In order to examine the obstacles militating against popular participation in the electoral process within the Wa Central Constituency, purposive sampling techniques select various stakeholders to afford them the opportunity to express their opinions on the issues being studied. Purposive sampling is one in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1997:87). Thus, the sample was selected to include election officials from the EC, Parliamentary candidates and elected representatives (both past and sitting) of political parties as well as Traditional and opinion leaders. Additionally, the technique was also used to select the six (6) communities where the studies were conducted based on past experiences and events in these communities that hinge on the electoral process.

3.2.2. Simple Random Sampling

In Ghana, the electoral process offers individual actors who are 18 years and above the opportunity to participate in elections by primarily casting their ballots in order to elect representatives in government. To capture the views of individuals, therefore, a simple random sample of 10 registered voters was drawn from each of the six (6) locations where the studies were carried out. Since the EC already has a computer database for all qualified and registered voters of the Wa central constituency, the list of voters for each selected community was used to obtain a randomized computer list from which respondents were then sought after from the first on the list until the tenth participant was obtained from each of the six locations. Hence, a total of 60 respondents were obtained throughout the field work using this method. This sample size is deemed appropriate because unlike surveys, a case study designed does not lay emphasis on the validity and reliability of data based on the number of respondents but rather on the quality and depth of the data that is collected.

3.3. Methods of Data Collection

Two main types of interviews, namely, in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted using qualitative methods in the field. Both methods usually allow the researcher to collect data from key participants using semi-structured or open-ended questions (Karma, 1999; Twumasi, 2001) and as a result the respondents had the liberty to give any answers by freely expressing themselves during the interviews. During the field work, six (6) IDIs were conducted with an official of the EC, NCCE, a Chief, the Regional Security Coordinator, an MP and a Candidate that lose in one previous election. In the process of in-depth interviews, the researcher engaged with each participant by posing questions in a neutral manner and listening attentively to participants' responses. Follow-up questions were then asked and probes were based on the responses that came up. Notes on the discussions were taken and later written out to reflect the proceedings with each interviewee. For the purposes of this research, six (6) FGDs were conducted. These FGDs covered three (3) political parties, namely, NDC, NPP and PNC which have consistently participated in elections in the constituency since 1992; one (1) with election officials; and two (2) with community leaders. According to Sarantakos (2005:196) a focus group discussion consists of one or two researchers and several participants, mostly between five (5) and ten (10) persons, although with deviations, who meet as a group to discuss a given research topic. In this research, the participants for a focus group ranged from 5 to 10 and together with a field assistant (or note-taker) the researcher (the moderator) led the discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions while the assistant took detailed notes on the discussions that ensued. This method yielded a large amount of information over a relatively short period of time in the field.

3.4. Techniques for Data Analysis and Presentation

The data from the structured questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The outputs from SPSS are presented in the form of frequencies, percentages and tables. Content analysis was also used in summarizing interviews and presented alongside the descriptive findings.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction

This section presents and discusses the data that was collected in the field. It begins with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and then discusses the various stages of Ghana's electoral process since the inception of the Fourth Republic from the standpoint of various stakeholders who were selected for the study.

4.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents and discusses some background information of the respondents. These include gender, age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, level of education and occupation as observed from the fieldwork.

4.2.1. Sex of Respondents

From the questionnaire, it was realized that 40 (66.7%) and 20 (33.3%) of the 60 respondents were male and female respectively. Thus, men were twice as many as women. This implies that the dominant opinion that is expressed in the discussions that will follow is that of males. Generally, violent conflicts in election related disputes are often perpetrated by men rather than their female counterparts. Thus, since the majority of the respondents are male, there is the likelihood that their views would reflect actual experiences with electoral process. Such opinions if expressed could form the basis for suggesting remedies to any existing violent behaviour within the electoral system in the constituency.

4.2.2. Age of Respondents

The age qualification for people to be registered to vote in elections in Ghana is 18 years and above. The results show that, the respondents were between 18 years and 69 years. Half of the respondents were aged between 18-30 years. The least number (8.3%) of respondents came from the group aged between 44-56 years. From the analysis, 48 out of the 60 respondents, representing 80% of the sampled population are 43 years and below. This implies that a lot of young qualified voters were interviewed compared to old people. In Ghana today, many young people are becoming active participants in the political processes. Sometimes they become subjects for manipulation by politicians to pursue their political interests. Therefore, the large number of young people in the sample may tend to provide hints on issues that generally have the potential to affect the credibility and legitimacy of elections.

4.2.3. Ethnicity of Respondents

The electoral laws of Ghana allow people who have resided in a particular place for at least five years to contest for both local and national elections in the area where they reside. From the analysis, four (4) ethnic groups, namely, Wala, Dagaaba, Sissala and Gonja were represented in the sample. Out of the 60 respondents, about 68% are Wala and approximately 28% are Dagaaba. Both the Sissala and Gonja are approximately 2%. According to GSS (2010), the Wala are the dominant ethnic group in the Wa Central Constituency. Ethnicity is increasingly becoming an important factor in the political equation for all political parties in Ghana. The 1992 Constitution provides that there should be ethnic, religious and regional balance in political representation and governance. However, in the quest to gain popular support and be able to hold on to power when elected to office, ethnic groups that are in Ghana are often disproportionately 'favoured' and minority groups sidelined. Thus, under circumstances where a minority group find itself in a privileged position within the government system, they may have the tendency to perpetrate the political interests and hold a share of political power whereby they can also have a voice in governance. During the 2008 elections, one of the arguments put up by some political leaders was that candidates contesting the elections should be Wala if they needed to stand a good chance of winning. In fact, since 1992 the candidates who have won elections in the constituency are Wala. Although political awareness is increasing, relationships, sometimes based on ethnic lines rather than competence have become the basis for the choice of candidate by voters. This, however, is gradually changing.

4.2.4. Religious Background of Respondents

Like ethnicity, religion has become quite an important factor in political contest. In areas where a particular religious denomination dominates, candidates from the dominant religion are always more likely to gain greater support from members of their religion. The three major religious groups in Ghana are Christianity, Islam and Traditional African Religion (TAR). From the analysis, only Christians and Muslims turned out to be members of the sample and hence the views of TAR will tend not to reflect in this study. The survey showed that, 44 (73.3%) and 16 (26.7%) are Muslims and Christians respectively. Generally, the Wala are predominantly Muslims and therefore the dominance of Islam in the sample is not surprising because they also constitute about 68% of the total sample size. Intra religious conflicts among the Islamic sects have brought a number of conflicts in the Wa Township. Sometimes electoral conflicts are linked to existing communal conflict in the communities. Apart from this, elections in the constituency always take both ethnic and religious dimensions and this has often led to tensions between supporters of candidates along such divisions.

4.2.5. Marital Status of Respondents

Like all societies in Ghana, marriage does not only form an important social institution among the people in the constituency, but also one in which political life and influences are bound to permeate through. From the survey, 50% respondents are married and 28 (47%) of them are single. The rest are either divorced or widowed. Since married people mostly will have to manage families, they are often able to exert their political influence over members of their household. Where one is the most influential member of the family or household, his or her political leaning is most likely to be emulated by the family or household. Families therefore serve as a source of recruitment for political parties in the constituency. Generally, the family is the initial point where socialization of the individual begins. Therefore, a person's political affiliation could very much stem from the family.

4.3. People's Participation in the Electoral Process

Interest in political participation has been growing steadily even though much is yet to be achieved in terms of gender disparities in political representation in Ghana. This section discusses the respondents' participation in the electoral process in the Constituency since Ghana returned to Constitutional rule in 1992. It also examines the political affiliation of the respondents as well as their impressions of election outcomes in the Constituency.

4.3.1. Participation of Respondents' in General Elections

Since 1992 till 2008, Ghana has held five (5) successful general election in which power has changed hands twice between the two major political parties—the NDC and the NPP. Within this continuum, voters have had different experiences through their participation in the electoral process and these experiences can cross-validate each other on matters being interrogated on multi-party democratic governance and the electoral process within the Wa Central Constituency. Table 3 shows the number of times respondents took part in voting in general elections since the inception of Ghana's Fourth Republic.

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| Once | 9 | 15 |
| 2 times | 14 | 23.3 |
| 3times | 9 | 15 |
| 4times | 11 | 18.3 |
| 5times | 17 | 28.3 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

Table 3: Participation of Respondents in General Elections (1992-2008)

Source: Field Survey, January, 2010

As shown in table 3, only 15% of the respondents might hold limited personal experiences on the electoral process within the Constituency because they have participated only once in an election. The rest of the 85% of the respondents have voted at least twice in general elections with about 28% of those interviewed taking part in all five general election held in the Constituency. The distribution of the electorate over the election period seems to suggest that the possibility of some anomaly in the electoral process within the constituency. It is expected that a greater proportion of voters who have participated in four or all five of the general elections conducted in the constituency would belong the older age category. But as shown in the cross tabulation below, many of the participants in four or five of the elections since 1992 belong to the 18-43 age group

| Count Age Group | Once | 2 Times | 3 Time | 4 Times | 5 Times | Total |
|-----------------|------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-------|
| 18-30 | 8 | 13 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 30 |
| 31-43 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 18 |
| 44-56 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| 57 and above | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 7 |
| Total | 9 | 14 | 9 | 11 | 17 | 60 |

Table 4: Age of respondents by number of times respondent voted in General elections since 1992 Cross-tabulation

Source: Field Survey, January 2010

From table 4, it is clear that only 9 out of a total of 28 people who have participated in four or all five general elections in the constituency are within the older age category of 44-69 years. This figure represents only about 32.1% of at least four or five times voters and only 15% of the total sample size. As it stands, therefore, it would seem to suggest that there have been incidences of minors or under age voting in the constituency over the period. Thus, the age of voters in the constituency pose as a challenge to the credibility and legitimacy of elections in the constituency.

4.3.2. Political Affiliation of Respondents

In Ghana, the electorate may be distinguished into three main categories—party members, party sympathizers and floating voters. A party member is one who is a recognized registered and card bearing member of a political party and who owes commitments to that

party based on the party's constitutions and/or code of conduct. Any other person who shares in the ideals and/or philosophy of a political party and gives such a party the greatest of support but does not officially qualify to be called a member is only a sympathizer of the group. However, the socio-politico-economic circumstances in Ghana have made such a distinction between members and sympathizers of political parties rather blurred. This is more so because of the different levels of commitments that people show in political processes. Political parties are not run as an organization. Records of members are not properly maintained at lower levels. It is difficult to ascertain who is a card bearing member at the constituency office. Internal Communication within political parties is greatly affected by inability of parties to function effectively as organizations. Apart from party members and sympathizers, there are the floating voters who can always swing their votes to any party or candidate based on their own personal considerations rather than a commitment of any sort. Many of these voters are often undecided young men and women who may be motivated by what a party or candidate is purporting to have to offer that would benefit them in the future. The degree of an individual's active participation in the political process may be influenced by the extent to which the individual is positioned relative to a political party. From the analysis, only a third of the respondents' said they are members of political parties while the rest are not. In Ghana, about 70.8% of voters are not registered members of political parties and about 28.7% of the registered voters admit that they are members of political parties (Boafo-Arthur, 2006:295).

4.3.3. Management of Party Supporters in General Elections

The 2008 CODEO presidential and parliamentary elections report indicates that political parties did not follow the political parties' code of conduct. It therefore means that most political parties have large number of supporters who are not governed by the rules and regulations of the parties. This makes managing party supporters' during rallies difficult since they are not registered members of the parties. Leaders of political parties cannot discipline members who misconduct themselves at rallies and others gatherings because they are not bound by the parties' constitutions. It also makes education of party members on the electoral process a difficult task. Most party supporters are loose members governs by no rules and can decide when to attend to party calls or not. From the interviews it came out that many people in the Constituency are not ready to disclose their party affiliations. The data from the survey indicate that 19 out of the 60 respondents (representing 31.7%) did not disclose the parties they belong to. However, 22 respondents representing 36.6% said that they belong to parties while 19 respondents (31.7%) answered no.

4.3.4. Impression of Respondents on Election Outcomes

In a multi-party democracy such as Ghana, the nature of the electoral process can affect the credibility and legitimacy of election outcomes. As indicated in Table 5, about 77% of the respondents in the Constituency observed that the outcomes of elections are acceptable because the processes involved before and during the conduct of elections by the Electoral Commission are usually largely transparent.

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Acceptable | 46 | 76.7 |
| Unacceptable | 5 | 8.3 |
| Don't know | 9 | 15 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

*Table 5: Views of Respondents on Election Outcomes
Source: Field Survey, January, 2010*

Only about 8% of the respondents contended that elections outcomes have not been acceptable because of instances of alleged votes buying, political intimidation of opponents and other crude methods often with the intention to navigate the rules or electoral laws. Additionally, 15% of the interviewees did not know whether under the current electoral arrangements, outcomes of elections can be described as generally acceptable or not. This group of people is still not impress and wish to see further improvements in the existing procedures and processes in the electoral system. The constituency has really experienced peaceful elections since 1992. Outcome of the elections results showed that the NDC is dominant and has won both the presidential and parliamentary elections. Ghana has successfully crossed the threshold of free and fair transitional elections (African Voices, 1998). Although there are some disturbances before, during and after elections, respondents felt such occurrences do not have significant effects on the outcome of the election results.

4.4. Stakeholders Involvement in the Demarcation of Electoral Districts

The legal frameworks that determine the demarcation of electoral boundaries are the 1992 Constitution, the Electoral Commission Act, (Act 451), Representation of the People Act (1992, L.I.1538), and the Local Government Act (Act 462). In line with these provisions, the electoral boundaries of Ghana have been reviewed twice. The first review in 1992 increased the constituencies from 140 to 200. In 2003, a second review by the Commission brought the number of constituencies from 200 to 230. This review was in line with the legal provision that demarcation of constituencies should be done after 8 years or after the holding of national census. Demarcation involved a lot of planning and consultation with stakeholders. The major stakeholders in demarcation exercises in Ghana are the Executive, EC, parliament, traditional authorities, Tendambas, local opinion leader's, District Assemblies and political parties.

4.4.1. Key Stakeholders in Demarcation of Electoral Boundaries in Wa Central Constituency

From the in-depth interviews with some Electoral Officers, the key stakeholders in the Constituency as far as demarcation of electoral boundaries are concerned were identified as the EC, Chief and Elders, Tendambas, Religious Leaders, District Assemblies (DAs), Political Parties, the Member of Parliament (MP), Civil Society Organisations (CSO), Opinion Leaders and the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S). Throughout the FGDs with political parties, participants cited the 2003 demarcation process to argue that there is insufficient consultation with the major stakeholders in the processes which led to the demarcation of electoral boundaries in the area. The participants also complained that no public education before, during and after the exercise was carried out to sensitise the public and create awareness on the new boundaries. Under such circumstances, there is room for speculation and misinformation which sometimes are a cause for various agitations at some communities. The last demarcation exercise for instance placed communities such as Tanina, and Polee in the Wa East and Bayiri under Wa West District. These communities belong to Waala traditional area and the demarcation has assigned them to difference traditional areas. From the discussions with political party executives, it was observed that people in these communities have not been pleased with this activity and they often try to show their frustrations during electoral exercises.

Demarcations generally have some implications for political victory or otherwise for parties in an election. Depending on how a demarcation is done it can affect the fortunes of political parties in elections. Problems with demarcation usually persist for a long time than any electoral problems. Political parties are therefore to ensure that an acceptable criterion is used so that the outcome will not adversely affect their interests. During the FGDs with selected political parties' executives in the Constituency, there was a general dissatisfaction about the level of consultation and involvement of political parties prior to the creation of the Wa central constituency in 2003. Political parties complain about the fact that they were not consulted before the final decision on the demarcation was taken. According to Handley (2007), electoral abuses such as malapportioned constituencies (electoral districts that vary substantially in population) and electoral boundaries that have been 'gerrymandered' (constituencies' boundaries intentionally drawn to advantage one political group at the expense of the other) can have profound effect on the outcome of an elections and the composition of a parliament.

The announcement in 2003, that the EC was to create new constituencies, generated protest especially from the main opposition party. da Rocha (2004:1) observed that the "announcement by the E.C that (30) additional parliamentary constituencies are to be created (...) provoked a confrontation between the Commission and the minority and a heated public debate in the media". The concern was that the demarcation was being done to favour the ruling party. The lack of sufficient consultation especially with political parties resulted in the protests from the opposition parties since there is always a perception (especially by the opposition parties) that the ruling government always has influence on the operation of public institutions.

4.5. Problems of Voters' Registration in Wa Central Constituency

Voters register is the official lists of persons who are eligible to vote in an election. Voters Registration exercise is governed by the Constitution and C.I.12. Article 45 of the 1992 Constitution mandates the EC 'to compile the register of voters and reviews it at such period as may be determine by law'. The EC has undertaken three general registrations and a number of revisions of voters register since 1989. It has also exhibited the voters' registers for public scrutiny, correction of personal data and deletion of unqualified names. The voters' register is crucial to the acceptability of any election results. A faulty voter register is not likely to lead to successful elections. Therefore, the effective management of the voter registration is crucial for the success of the electoral process (Aye, 1997). For the register to be credible there must be stakeholders' participation in it compilation and exhibition. Up to date, the EC is still grappling with three problems in the management of the register, notably; how to prevent under age registration, multiple registration and deletion of unqualified names. Discussions with the EC staff suggest that the support of communities is crucial if these problems are to be resolved. Other major problems associated with the registration exercise include the shortages of registration materials and busing of people to registration centers by political parties (CODEO, 2008).

4.5.1. Impressions of the Registration Process in the Constituency

An understanding of the voters' registration procedures is a pre-requisite for a successful registration of all eligible members of the population. It also impinges on the extent of credibility of the voters register that will eventually be used in an election as well as the election outcome. The opinion of respondents on the procedures and processes of registration exercises in the Constituency are provided in table 6 below.

| Description of the Process | Number of Respondents | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Very simple and clear | 37 | 61.7 |
| Very long and time consuming | 19 | 31.7 |
| Complex and confusing | 4 | 6.6 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

Table 6: Description of the Voters' Registration Process by Respondents

Source: Field Survey, January, 2010

As indicated in the table above, about 62% of the respondents view the registration procedures as very simple and clear while about 32% of them think that the procedures were very long and time consuming. The waiting time for people to get themselves registered at

the registration centers can sometimes affect the turn out for registration exercises and ultimately the turn out in the general election. About 6.6% of the respondents said the procedure is complex and confusing. Voters in the Wa Township where there is a high voter population will certainly find the registration procedure as time consuming and complex due to the presence of long queues during the registration exercises. This calls for review of registration centers to reflect the increase in population in our communities. On the other hand, while small communities with low population will describe the procedures as very simple because they can register with much ease. Again while the Township normally experience shortage of materials and long queues, the registration centers in the rural communities return a lot of materials unused.

During FGD and in depth interviews with political party officials, election administrators and election officials, many expressed the frustration that applicants go through during registration exercises. According to the participants some of the problems associated with the exercise shortage of registration materials, long queues, busing of people to centers, under age registration, lack of security at the centers and partisan attitude of the electoral officer and registration officials. These difficulties created frustration which sometimes denied eligible applicants the opportunity to register thereby creating doubts on the credibility of the register. It was also observed that the EC preparations towards its major activities leave much to be desired. Poor timing of exercise, shortage of materials and late arrival of materials are some inadequacy identified with the preparation of the exercise.

4.5.2. Eligibility of Potential Voters and Access to Voter Registration

In a democracy eligibility for people to vote must be based on clear criteria which are acceptable to all participating parties. Such criteria are outlined in the rules and regulations governing registration in the country. From the analysis respondents' opinions on whether the registration procedures afford perspective applicants the opportunity to register, 66.7% of respondents believed that the registration procedures afforded people the chance to be registered while 30% of respondents are of the opinion that the procedures did not give all eligible voters the chance to be registered. It is impossible to capture all eligible people in a registration; however the number of respondents who believed that the system does not afford all people the chance to register is on the high side.

Managing an acceptable and credible voter's register has remained a big challenge to the EC. In the 2004 registration exercise, this recurrent difficulty was magnified by some serious administration and logistic lapses-late start of registration exercise, inadequate registration materials, particular cameras-which led to allegation of disenfranchisement and deliberate manipulation of the registration (IDEG, 2007). This is supported by a report on the 2004 registration exercise which says 'this created a situation where a large number of applicants were unable to present themselves for their pictures to be taken for their I.D cards to be issued as scheduled by the commission'(Elections Report, 2005).

Although another chance was opened to them during the mopping up exercise, still a good number were not captured. There were two categories of people who could not register; applicants who began the process and did not complete and applicants who did not register due to shortages of materials. Problems with voters' registration were pronounced in the highly populated areas in the towns and this sometimes denied some qualified voters the chance to be registered. According to statistics from Wa Municipal Commission office, in 2006, 2670 people applied for registration, 2614 completed the process and 56 did not complete the process .In 2008, 11239 people applied for registration, 10989 completed the process and 250 did not complete the process. Persons who could not complete the process were high in 2008 because there was acute shortage of forms and the Commission had to resort to the use of improvised forms. All persons registered on the improvised forms were to visit their various centers during the mopping-up exercise to have their particulars transferred to the proper forms. At the end of the mopping-up exercise some people did not come to complete the registration process and were therefore not qualified voters.

This acute shortage of registration forms created panic and some voters' resorted to registering anywhere forms were available. This will create problem during the District Level Elections (DLE) as voters who registered outside their electoral area cannot vote for their candidates. During FGD the blame was put on the E.C and the Political Parties. There was not adequate preparation toward the exercise. Projection of eligible registrants did not take into consideration intakes of the tertiary institutions. The high numbers of students from the institutions put pressure on registration materials, creating shortage in the town within three days in to the registration exercise. Political Parties were blamed for busing people to areas they did not reside to register. 'The busing of party supporters to party strongholds for partisan gain particularly during the limited registration of voters and transfer of vote processes resulted in some political tension and violence in some of the regions' (CODEO, 2009). This was met with resistance at some centers, holding up registration procedures. Sometimes it took Police or Military interventions to maintain order. Politicians were also believed to be behind minors' registration which was one of the causes of shortage of materials.

Another problem identified during FGD and in depth interview is the problem of determining applicants' age. Many people who normally go to the centers to register cannot give evidence of their age. This accounted for the high number of under aged challenges recorded during registration exercise. Statistics from the Wa Municipal office indicates that, out of 64 challenge cases recorded during the 2008 registration, 32 were issues on less than 18 years of age. It was also detected that some adults were behind the under aged registration. One serious problem that is creeping into our body politics is dishonesty and deliberate peddling of falsehood by political activists. Four birth certificates presented by parents as evidence of their children's ages were detected to have been falsified. It is the views of most respondents that the national identification registration exercise currently going on nationwide and biometric registration will solve some of these problems.

4.5.3. Voters Register and Voter Identification on Polling Day

From the survey, 43 (71.7%) respondents believed that the voter's registers contain enough personal data of voters that make voter identification easy on voting day. This position was supported by views from the FGD. During registration, each voter is given identification (ID) card which captures the voter's name, sex, age, ID card number and polling station code number. The ID card also has the picture of the voter. This information of the voter is also captured in the voters' register. On the day of the poll, each qualified voter is required to carry the voter's ID card to the polling station where s/he is to vote. Here the details on the ID are compared to those in the register to confirm the voter's ID before one is allowed to vote or not.

To prevent multiple voting by individuals, each successful voter is marked with indelible ink. Despite all these measures, 15 (or 25%) of the respondents believed that the register is still not adequate to help identify voters. They contend that pictures are sometimes blurred. There are also numerous reports of impersonation at polling stations. This suggests that voter identification processes on polling day needs to be further strengthened to enhance the electoral process.

From the FGDs, it came out that apart from the problem of blur pictures, some voters also go to vote without the ID cards and based on some compromises between polling officials and party agents are allowed to vote. Sometimes people misplace their voter ID before the election but do not want to lose their votes. Under such circumstances, it is only the name in the register and the familiarity of the individual among the polling officials and party agents that is used as the basis to allow such people to vote. But this can only be effective in small communities where a resident can be identified by all other members of the area rather than for large communities or polling stations. Thus, any non-conventional method to identify voters in compact settlements such as Wa Township could pose as an affront to the electoral process and lead to lack of credibility in the electoral outcomes.

4.5.4. Impersonation during Voting

One problem that still bedevils Ghana's election system is impersonation. People sometimes go to the polling station to vote only to realize that someone has already voted in their name and so are usually turned away. From the analysis, 4.8, 75% of the respondents answered no whereas about 23% of them responded on the affirmative. From the statistics it means that though there are reported instances of impersonation during elections, less than a quarter of the electorate in Wa Central Constituency perceived it as an issue in the electoral process. Typically, the fact that someone could not vote because the name was marked at the time the person went to vote does not logically lead to the conclusion that someone else impersonated to vote. Sometimes, it could be a result of human error due to fatigue on the part of the polling official checking the register or a fraud on the part of the official who is doing it in connivance with other officials, candidate or political party.

During the FGDs respondents blamed impersonation on election officials who connive with politicians to cheat during voting. They claimed many election officials are agents of political parties and work to the interest of the parties rather than the Commission. The fact that there are still impersonations during voting due to bad pictures or in collaboration with officials means that voter identification is a problem in the conduct of elections.

4.5.5. Access to Registration Centers

Polling Stations are set up at convenient locations to make it easy for voters to vote. One criterion that is often used by the EC to cite polling stations is that these centers should not be so far away to make it difficult for the aged and sick people to cast their votes. In the interviews with electoral officers, it was noted that polling stations should not be more than 5 km apart and that natural barriers such as rivers, mountains and other features that will make movement difficult should be taken into consideration when determining polling stations. Again, the population of a settlement can also be a factor that determines the location of a voting center. All these are taken into consideration in the determination of electoral areas, units and polling stations. Information shows the distribution of the responses of respondents who were interviewed during the study on access to polling stations within the electoral area. From the analysis, 71.7% of the voters interviewed noted that the polling stations within their electoral areas are accessible, whereas 28.3% of them see the location of polling stations as inaccessible to them.

From the foregoing discussions, the view therefore is that despite the criteria put in place by the EC to ensure easy access to polling stations, there are still pockets of polling stations within the constituency that are not easy to access by some voters. This certainly is a stumbling block to the electoral process in the constituency as it has the potential of disenfranchising a cross-section of voters within certain localities. With increase in voter population, some centers have very high voter population that sometimes takes voting beyond the regulated time lag of 5:00 pm—the time for the close of polls. It is very difficult manually counting accurately a polling station with a high number of registered voters. This is a source of electoral conflicts. Many applications for creation of polling stations are still pending approval. The creation of more polling stations especially at new settlements that are springing up will ease congestions on the already existing polling stations on the Election Day. The establishment of University for Development Studies and Wa Polytechnic has increased the population of Wa and EC should take this in to consideration in the planning and execution of electoral activities.

4.5.6. Credibility of Voters Register

There is no doubt that a credible electoral roll is a key factor to the administration of free and fair elections (Dumor cited in Ayee, 2001:15). Four attributes of a good register have been recommended. The first is that the register should be inclusive of all eligible population. Adequate provision should be made to capture the names of all qualified voters. Again the qualifying age for registration should not be so high to exclude greater number of the population. Second, the register should be current and up to date. There should

be a mechanism for removing deceased and unqualified names from the register and it should be updated periodically to capture people who have attained the qualifying age for voting. To make it effective, there should be punitive measures in place to punish people who flout the rules. The third attribute is that there should be adequate personal data of voters—name, age, sex, picture, ID number and polling station code of each eligible voter. Fourthly a good voters' register should be acceptable to political parties and other stakeholders that are to take part in the elections. (AAEA, 2010). Results of elections will not be accepted if the register is not accepted. Acceptable register build confidence in the parties contesting in the elections. From the analysis, as many as 70% of respondents considered the registers in the constituency to be credible while 30% hold the contrary view. This implies that about a third of voters in the constituency hold the view that the voters register being used in the elections is not credible. To buttress this position, reasons such as under age voting, use of fake I.D cards, poor quality of pictures, prevalence of name of deceased persons which should have been removed from the register and omission of names of persons that have registered are some of the anomalies in the voters registers. During the FGD with one of the political parties, similar sentiments were raised to the effect that the current voters register being used is not credible for genuine elections. This group claims that some the Electoral Officer (EO) for the constituency is a sympathizer of a political party and usually recruits partisan registration officers who work to satisfy the interest of his political leaning. The EO was also alleged to have conveyed registration forms to other districts to further the political interest of a political party during the last general elections.

Another complaint was that registration officers did registration secretly after closed of the registration hours each day. These were allegations which could not be supported with facts. At every registration center, the party agents took down serial numbers of the forms issued to that center. They equally recorded the serial numbers of the first and last forms each day. Forms from other centers could easily be detected since each center is supplied with unique forms. Again agents recorded total number of people registered at the close of each day and any additional registration could easily be noticed. Notwithstanding these claims, majority of the stakeholders interviewed held the opinion that since 1992 the register has gone through a lot of improvements and though it is not yet perfect, significant progress has been made. Although some concerns are being raised, there is now a greater public confidence in the electoral roll than ever before.

4.5.7. Public Education on the Electoral Process

Public understanding of the electoral process is crucial to effective public participation and the making of informed choices. Voter education precedes all electoral activities undertaken by the EC. It is normally intended to make the voters knowledgeable in the process and to encourage popular participation in elections. Indeed 'the extent to which people are informed on issues and their ability to understand them is a common theme in the discussion of the success of democracy practice' (Catt, 1999:9). Voter education is especially important in a country like Ghana with a high illiterate rural dwellers who need sufficient information and time to understand the complex nature of the electoral process. Ghana multi-party democracy can only flourish if the illiterate voters are given sufficient information on how to vote (Karikari, 2000). Table 4.11 below shows the distribution of the respondents according to the amount of information received to enable them understand the process and to participate meaningfully in the electoral process. The EC has a constitutional mandate to educate the general public on the electoral process. Public education is normally done through the print and electronic media, street announcements, posters and community durbars. Other institutions such as NCCE, the Information Service Department and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are equally enjoined to educate the public on the electoral process and other civil duties. The results shows that, about 68% of the respondents said the information they receive is always sufficient whereas the rest noted that it is not always sufficient. Since 1992, Ghana has successfully held five general elections and a number of District Level Elections (DLE). Over this period, many citizens have become more conversant with electoral process because the procedures are more or less repetitive and routine in nature. This notwithstanding over 30% of the voters sampled and interviewed still asserts that they do not have access to voter information. It therefore implies that there are yet serious challenges to overcome with respect to public education on election processes and procedures.

During the interviews, various reasons were adduced to justify the claim that voter education is insufficient. There are still indications that in every election a large number of people display ignorance about the electoral laws and procedures. Sometimes this is reflected in an unacceptable number of rejected ballots in elections. Voters and even party' leaders exhibit ignorance and lack of knowledge in the electoral process during election. Also Election Officials commit errors and irregularities in the conduct of elections. Participants in the FGDs observed that the periodic information to the public during elections is not enough for meaningful understanding of the electoral process since the elections occur in every four years. They opined that voter education should be an ongoing exercise targeting all voters especially those who are rural dwellers and the illiterate population. Another observations that came out during the FGDs was that the method of disseminating voters' information was identified as poor and ineffective, thereby one of the causes for the lack of understanding of the electoral process and voting procedures. The jingles are often played on moving vans and this is not enough to educate the public. There is the need for community durbars and the involvement of chiefs and opinion leaders in the communities to sensitise the public on election matters. This will create conducive atmosphere for interaction and enable voter educators to get feedback from the public. The people can also ask questions for clarification.

Voters' education in Ghana normally includes the need to take part in national elections and referenda, when to vote, where to vote and how to vote. However it an undeniable fact that elections still records high numbers of rejected ballot papers. Rejected ballot papers are serious problems that have bedeviled the electoral process since the inception of the fourth Republic.

The cost of conducting Elections is huge to the nation as well as to the parties and individuals. Every effort should be made to enable voters indicate their choices correctly. It is the opinion of FGDs that, the second round of voting could have been averted if the

nationwide rejected ballots were correctly voted. Many respondents blamed the high number of rejected ballots on poor education. The data shows that, 66.7% of the respondents believed the high number of rejected votes was due to poor voter education whereas 20% said it was due to voters' indifference and apathy. However, 11.7% associated rejected ballots to miseducation on the part of politically opponents in order to gain advantage over strong opponents. Only 1.7% linked rejected ballots to the structure of the ballot papers. Deepening citizens understanding of the electoral system and management is still a problem confronting the EC. Although Ghanaians appear to be generally conversant with their civic responsibilities, the high number of invalid ballots and the continued prevalence of irregular voting practices indicate high levels of ignorance about the laws, procedures and processes of elections (IDEG, 2007). According to Jonah (2005), the high level of rejected ballots in 2004 elections (about 2.13%), although attributed to a high level of illiteracy and political protest, still raises concerns about the effectiveness of the voter education.

Article 45(d), of the 1992 constitution mandates the EC to 'educate the people on the electoral process and purpose'. Considering the nature of voters' education, the EC is deficient in terms of personnel and logistic to do effective voters education. Another constitutional body that is mandated to educate the public is the NCCE. However its mandate is broader than voter education. NCCE has a broad mandate with regards to political participation, to create and sustain awareness of the principles and objectives of the constitution; to educate and encourage the public to defend the constitution, and to formulate, implement and oversee programmes intended to inculcate in Ghanaians awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people (NCCE, 2003:3). It is therefore not surprising that respondents shared the blame between these two sister institutions.

According to views expressed by respondents, 36.7% of the people interviewed blamed low education on the EC and the same percent of people also put the blame on NCCE. A good number of respondents, 17.2% put the blame on the government while 6.9% blame the political parties. The EC and the NCCE took the blame because they are mandated by the constitution to educate the public on the electoral process. Lack of collaboration between the two institutions as well as logistical constraints are some reasons that account for poor voters' education. FGD put the blame on the government. They mentioned the lack of logistic support given to the EC and the NCCE as the main cause of low voters' education in the country. I am of the opinion that much blame should be put on the political parties for lack of internal communication mechanism within the parties. Discussions on EC operations that take place at IPAC, RIPAC and DIPAC are not transmitted to the rank and file of the party members. Modalities for the conduct of all the activities the EC undertakes are discussed at these meetings with political party representatives for them to understand and equally educate their members. Surprisingly, parties are not able to communicate to their members' discussion at these forums. During operations you will find a party activist objecting to modalities that were reached with their representatives at these meetings. This go to support the assertion that most party followers are not registered members do not participation in meetings.

4.6. Factors that Affects the Conduct of Elections and Election Outcome

Elections are very important in any of multiparty democracy dispensation. The electoral process is a channel through which people choose their leaders and hold them responsible. Elections are also crucial to the legitimacy of the government and effective functioning of public institutions. Defective elections put the legitimacy of the government in question and the entire democratic system at risk. Ghana's electoral success has been lauded both locally and internationally (African Voices, 1998). Five national elections and four DLE have been conducted in the country. However, it is a fact that elections have heightened tensions in this country and many people were expecting the worse in the last elections. Political intolerance was manifested among supporters of the political parties in the presidential and parliamentary primaries resulting in violent clashes in some instances.

The disregard for the Political Parties' Code of Conduct and the Public Order Act in the scheduling of campaign events by political parties also resulted in violent clashes among party supporters (CODEO, 2009). According to the 2007 IDEG report Ghana's elections have been marked by isolated act of violence over the 1992-2004 periods. There were electoral killing in 1992 and 1996 as well as in 2000 elections (Gyimah-Boadi, 2000, Ayee, 2001:60). Table 4.14 indicates the views of respondents on what causes electoral disputes. Majority of respondents 51.7% assigned causes of electoral disputes to manipulation of the electoral process. Although this perception may not be entirely true, it goes to buttress the point made earlier that EC recruit partisan polling officials who work to further the interests of their political parties. A significant number of respondents 30% put the causes of electoral disputes on poor understanding of the electoral laws. This is also re-echoing the low public education on the electoral process which majority of respondents faulted the EC and the NCCE.

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Manipulation of the electoral process | 31 | 51.7 |
| Poor understanding of the electoral laws | 18 | 30 |
| Misinformation | 9 | 15 |
| A planned strategy | 1 | 1.7 |
| Ethnic sentiments | 1 | 1.7 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents' Opinion on Causes of Disputes on Elections Results

Source: Field Survey, January, 2010

However, 15% of the respondents assigned electoral disputes to misinformation, while 1.7%, believed it to be a planned strategy with 1.7% attributing it to ethnic sentiment. The low rating of ethnic sentiment as a cause of electoral disputes shows that the constituency

is homogenous in term of its ethnic composition and support the fact that one ethnic group is dominant in the constituency. Manual counting of ballot papers was identified as a source of electoral disputes. Sometimes this counting takes place in darkness. Again improper sorting of ballot papers sometimes result in reduction of some candidates votes .According to CODEO (2009) report, in Charia a village in the Wa central constituency (which was the home constituency of the then deputy minister for Agriculture), NDC supporters were physically prevented from entering and campaigning in the village. This resulted in a violent clash between the supporters.

Generally, the electoral system consist of laws, rights, institutions, processes and formulas relevant to the preparation and conduct of elections as well as the declaration of results (AAEA, 2010). All electoral activities are governed by rules and regulations and everybody competing in elections should abide by these rules. Elections are also comprised of procedures and processes which all must follow. The EC is the institution mandated to apply the laws and supervise the processes people are to follow. Transparency and fairness will require equal opportunity for all contesting in the elections. The laws and regulations governing elections should be applied fairly across board. In a nutshell there should be level playing field for all taking part in the election. Some aspects of transparency are out of the purview of the institution supervising the elections. From the survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) affirmed that in spite of the problems with violence and other electoral disputes, the electoral process is transparent. This is supported by views from FGD and in depth interviews. The count of ballots at the polling stations, transparent ballot boxers (used to be opaque), pictures on the registers, photo I.D cards and other measures put in place were mentioned to support this assertion. The institution of IPAC, DIPAC and DIPAC at national, regional and district levels to dialogue with political parties and major stakeholders has built confidence and trust in the electoral system. Since 1992, Wa central constituency results have not been disputed. Issues concerning elections have always been resolved amicably to the satisfaction of all parties. However, 20% of respondents do not think that the electoral process is transparent enough to guarantee genuine winners in an electoral contest. This is supported by respondents' assertion that there is manipulation in the electoral process which is believed to be a major cause of electoral dispute.

The factors that influence voters' choice of candidates are varied and sometimes may not depend on the competence and the ability of a candidate to perform the task. In developing countries with Ghana not an exception, family ties, ethnic background, religion, traditional and economic factors are some important factors that determine voters' choice of candidates.

It is not surprising that the Wa central constituency seat has been won by Wala candidates since 1992. From the survey revealed that, 61.7% of the respondents hold a view that competence is the main criteria that influence the choice of candidates. However, about 37% of the respondents feel that other considerations come into play in the choice of candidates in elections. This figure constitute more than a third of the sampled population a therefore tend to suggest that a significant number of voters consider other factors either than competence in the selection of a candidate to be voted for. Discussions in FGD and in depth interview indicate that money influence is greater in the choice of candidate. In fact one lost parliamentary candidate attributed his lost to financial constraint. Aye (2001:40) asserts that "there were allegations that some Ghanaians particularly those in the rural areas had been influenced by gifts and promises such as television and radio sets, Wellington boots, cutlasses and money from the District Assemblies Poverty Alleviation Fund". Ethnic and religious backgrounds equally play an important role in the choice of candidate in the constituency. In the build up to the primaries of one political party it was used as an issue in the campaign against one of the candidate who was standing for election.

Divination, sorcery and other means of influencing future events is a common practice in football as in elections. Huge sums of money are sent on what is known as 'ways and means' to enhance chances of winning electoral events. Mallams and spiritual pastors are consulted as part of preparation toward elections.

In fact, the role of a Nigerian Pastor Emmanuel Joshua in the 2008 election is well known. There is some kind of perception among some people that he played a significant role in the outcome of the presidential election. Majority of respondents interviewed (81.7%) are of the opinion that spiritual powers do not play any significant role in determining winners in elections. This is rightly so because these activities are not known to the general public. They are only known to certain people in the party and the candidates. The rest of respondents 18.3% believe that spiritual powers influence electoral outcome in the constituency.

Electoral violence during and after elections is an unacceptable practice that is becoming part of elections in the constituency. Interestingly, the violence is not limited to general elections but also a common feature in parties' primaries and election of regional and constituency executives. It is not uncommon to find heavy police and military presence at venues for election of parties' executives or election of parliamentary candidates. Injuries to life and destruction of property have been recorded at these occasions. In 2001 when a nominee for the position of Wa District Chief Executive was withdrawn before confirmation, party supporters burnt vehicles in protest against the withdrawal. Registration official assigned to Tanina were chased away in 2004 and it took dialogue and police presence for the exercise to go on there. Again during 2008 registration and elections military and police intervention prevented physical confrontation at many centres in the constituency. Use of abusive language at rallies, disruption of opponent rallies, the use of 'machomen' and removal of posters are some of the unhealthy practice which heighten the political atmosphere during elections. Voters transfer activities were also characterized by accusation and violence.

From the study, the views from respondents are divided. Half of respondents 50% are of the opinion that electoral related violence did not occasioned in the constituency while 48.2% of respondents think otherwise. There are flashpoints in the constituency and much electoral related violence normal occurs at these areas. Again elections in the rural communities are likely to be peaceful while that of urban centers are usually prone to violence.

Political parties hold rallies to inform supporters and sympathizers policies and programmes they intend to pursue if they come to power. Rallies are also used to educate members on the electoral process especially how to mark the ballots. Some analysts use rallies as a basis of assessing political parties' strength in elections. Large rallies may be an indication of massive endorsement of the political parties in that environment. Therefore rallies should be peaceful if the desired purpose is to be achieved. Almost half of respondents (48.3%) feel that rallies are generally peaceful. A total of 50.7% of respondents agree that there is some degree of problems associated with rallies in the constituency. There is, however, a difference in opinion as to the degree of violence, from the study, 5% of the respondents describe rallies as generally violent whereas 39% describe rallies as occasionally violent. In addition, 5% assert rallies to be always disruptive while 1.7% describes rallies as occasionally disruptive.

The role of the media in political campaign during election cannot be overemphasized. Media is to help inform and educate the public on the political manifestos of political parties. This will help the citizens make an informed choice during the poll.

In this era of media plurality, access to media is not an issue in elections. The only complaint mostly made by the opposition parties is access to state-owned media. A significant number of respondents (66.7%) are of the view that political parties have access to the media while 26.7% feel that access to the media is a problem for some parties. During elections there are complaints from the opposition parties of unfair treatment by state-owned media. Incumbent government uses every occasion to campaign to the detriment of the opposition parties.

4.7. Obstacles Militating Against Popular Participation in the Electoral Process in the Constituency

Despite the general acceptability of current boundaries, some participants during the FGDs still claimed that incumbent undue influences and interventions had been the result of this demarcation. Those who hold this view also cite that the Commission carved out only communities that are sympathetic to the ruling NPP party at the time to form Wa East Constituency which it won in the 2004 and 2008 elections. However, these assertions are not supported by evidence. The NPP has never won the Wa central constituency since the creation of the constituency in 2003. Out of the 30 constituencies that the demarcation affected nationally, the NPP controlled 15, the NDC 13 and the PNC 2. At the elections 2004, the NPP won 16 of the new seats the NDC 13 and the PNC 1 (IDEG, 2007).

Both the FGDs and individual interviews revealed that inadequate public education may have deprived the exercise of the openness it deserves. Some of the 'Big Chiefs' who were briefed did not disseminate the information to their sub-chiefs or subjects. Again some communities that owe allegiance to Wala Traditional Council are now put under Wa East and Wa West districts. According to the election administrators the demarcation was also adding to some of the existing Chieftaincy and land disputes. The Chiefs in the Wala traditional area wanted their territories and sub-chiefs to be put in the Wa Central Constituency. However, a full recognition to such traditional and customary issues would have also meant to violate or navigate the existing laws on demarcation. Wa Municipality is coincidental Wa Central Constituency. A Municipality by definition is a compact settlement with at least ninety-five thousand people. Certain settlements that are far away cannot be part.

4.8. Opportunities for Enhancing the Electoral Process in Wa Central Constituency

Participants in the FGDs see the current constituency boundary demarcation as a fair demarcation for free and fair elections. In their opinions the constituency consists of compact settlements that are much closer to each other. This makes communication to party supporters an easy task. The cost of campaign and political organization is also drastically reduced as the communities to be covered are reduced to a small number. Monitoring and supervision of electoral activities which used to be a difficult task prior to the creation of the new boundaries is now done with much ease because the constituency can be covered in a single day. Delay in declaration of elections results is reduced drastically because polling stations are closed and collation can be done in a short time. Formally, Wa West constituency was part of the Wa central constituency until the 2003.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of the Research Process

This section provides a brief outline of the research problem and the main objective for carrying out the study. It also highlights of the methods, tools and techniques used to collect and analyze the data.

5.2. Key Findings

5.2.1. Level of Stakeholders Involvement in the Demarcation of Electoral Districts

Inadequate stakeholders' involvement is the bane of electoral boundaries demarcation in the constituency. Communal protest against electoral boundaries was a result of lack of understanding of the criteria governing the demarcation. Although there was some level of stakeholders' involvement, Tendambas who are major stakeholders in land matters were not part of this consultation. Land in this part of the country belongs to Tendambas and not chiefs. Therefore contacting paramount chiefs was not sufficient involvement of major stakeholders. Broad base consultation of all stakeholders is crucial for acceptable electoral demarcation. The principle of demarcation was embraced by all as a laudable exercise. However, the exclusion of some communities which are under Wala traditional area is a problem that will persist for a long time.

The lack of understanding of electoral demarcation resulted in wrong perception of the entire exercise. This is as a result of insufficient public education of key stakeholders. Some communities are dissatisfied with the recent demarcation and have petitioned for a redress. Electoral boundaries need not coincide with traditional boundaries and public education was necessary to create communities understanding and cooperation. Electoral boundary problems persist for long and sometimes these problems may be permanent. Public understanding and participation is crucial for a successful demarcation exercise. Again the public did not know that they could seek redress of electoral demarcation in the court. Many of these problems could have been resolved in court of law than the demonstrations and protests embarked upon.

The recent electoral demarcation cut-off some territories of the Wala traditional areas into other traditional areas. A number of communities that belongs to the Wala traditional area are now in the Wa West and Wa East District Assemblies and this is a major concern to people in the affected area as well the Wala traditional Authority. These communities have resisted the decision of the EC and have demonstrated their resentments through disruption of electoral activities, protests, boycotts, threat on the life of officials who work there and petitions.

Voting centers are far away thus making it difficult for old and sick people to participate effectively in many electoral activities. There is massive expansion in the municipality and polling stations should be created to ease tension during electoral activities. Some polling centres have large voters' population which delays voting into darkness. Apart from the problems associated with sorting ballot and counting in the night some voters are discouraged from voting due to the delay in the queues.

5.2.2. Problems Associated with the Registration of Voters

Occasional registration is not convenient as it creates congestion and frustration for prospective applicants who sometimes are unable to register within the stipulated period. The present mode of registering voters disenfranchises a lot of qualified voters. Once a voter is not present at the time of registration s/he cannot vote. A voter must be 18 years old on the day of registration. This implies that voters who will be 18 after the end of registration and before the day of elections will not be given the chance to register. Many respondents are of the opinions that registration of voters should be a continuous event and not a periodic exercise as it pertains now. It is therefore suggested that the EC should be funded to do an open registration that will register people all year round.

Minor registration is on the high side and steps should be taken to stop or minimize it. This situation is disturbing because these minors are sometimes instigated by parents and politicians. Besides being illegal, minors cannot make their own choices independently and may be under the directions of some people. The mobilization of minor to register is a source of electoral violence as people sometimes want to physically prevent them from registering rather than challenging them.

Politicians are sometimes behind minor and double registration. They are also blamed for busing people to registration centers. Chaos was created at some centers as some community members resisted the registration of people who were not from their communities. In some cases it took the military and police to bring the situation under control. Moving people to different locations either than where they reside is against the electoral laws.

Shortages of materials are a common feature during registration of voters. This phenomenon creates frustration and desperation in voters who sometimes resort to registering anywhere forms were available. In 2008, many voters moved from Wa town to Kpongungu to register because most centers ran out of forms. This resulted in a challenge of 20 prospective voters on the ground that they were not resident of the locality.

Some registration officials are believed to be partisan in the discharge of their duties. There were allegations of registration officers registering people after close of work while some connived with party officials to register minors and some showed open bias in the decisions they took on the field.

There was low public education on the registration exercise. This could probably be the cause of minor and double registration that was encountered during the exercise. Many voters showed lack of knowledge on rules and regulations on registration. As a result many irregularities occurred during registration. A voter should register at a registration centre close to his resident. This provision was not observed during the registration exercise.

Apathy and low public participation in exhibition of voters register resulted in low turn in the exhibition exercise. Low participation of this exercise could also be blame on people's believed that their names are already in the registers and no need to verify. Exhibition exercise offers voters the opportunity to verify their personal data captured during the registration of voters exercise. Problems with regards to omission of names, bad pictures, and other problems that normally bring controversy during elections could be handled at exhibition.

5.2.3. Factors that Affect the Conduct of Elections and Election Outcome

There is the perception that some election officials connived with politicians to cheat during elections. The temporary staffs the EC engages to undertake electoral duties should be neutral and fair to all candidates. These people who are mostly teachers and other public servants are not permanent staffs of the EC. However their role they perform in elections is very critical in the conduct of free and fair elections. The EC needs to do a proper background checking before recruiting them.

Low voter education is the cause of high rejected ballots in the constituency. Elections still record high rejected ballot papers and this is a cost to the nation as well as to political parties and candidates. In elections every vote is crucial and effort should be made to enable voters demonstrate their choices on the ballot papers.

Political Parties do not comply with code of conduct or rules. These are rules and regulations political parties formulate to guide their conduct before, during and after elections. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure free and fair elections. However these rules are not enforceable and political parties flout them with impunity. Sanction should be applied on parties who flout these rules.

The use of money and materials influence is high in the municipality. Voters in the Municipality are vulnerable due to high levels of poverty and large number of unemployed youth. Illiteracy is also high in the constituency making voters susceptible to the influence of money. The influence of money and material are in two ways. A paltry sum of money can influence somebody's mind in election or make the person to be engaged in electoral violence.

Violence and intimidation is creeping in to our body politics. Electoral violence and intimidation is becoming a common feature in the electoral process in the constituency. Electoral violence is not limited to general elections but is also present in the internal democratic process of the political parties.

Communal conflicts sometimes have direct influence on electoral conflicts. The Municipality is plagued with religious and chieftaincy violence. Political campaigns are occasions to settle personal scores with rival factions. When insults are made on political ground on rival factions, it takes a political dimension because s/he said it on a party platform. In assessing electoral violence the underlying socio-economic and tradition situation should be taken into consideration.

The winner takes all is not the best electoral system in the constituency. One political party has won elections in the constituency since the inception of the fourth republic. This situation could lead to voters' apathy since the other parties' supporters will feel that they are wasting votes on their parliamentary candidates. The electoral system makes political contest a 'do or die' event. The winner will have everything and the loser will lose everything. It therefore makes winning the only option open to competitors. This makes election acrimonious and adversarial.

5.2.4. Public Understanding of the Electoral Process

Public education on all electoral events are rated low. Therefore public understanding of the electoral process is low and this is blamed on ineffective public education. The current method of public education which is mainly by street announcement, display of posters, jingle and information in the print and electronic media is not yielding the desired results. There is the need to have a more interactive way of reaching to the public. Community durbars and community educators who will frequently interact with the people will be more appropriate in the rural communities where other method of education will not be effective.

Inadequate funding is affecting meaningful public education. For public education to be effective and achieve the desired result, it should be continuous and not limited to elections period. This will require budgeting allocation from central government. All year public education on the electoral process will make the public knowledgeable in the electoral process thereby reducing irregularities and mistrust that are associated with elections in the constituency.

Lack of internal communication within Political Parties is affecting dissemination of electoral information and the understanding of the electoral process among members. Deliberations between the EC and political parties on policies and programmes to be undertaken are not disseminated among party members. There are national, regional and district forums at which modalities on electoral activities are first discussed with party representatives to understand and also educate their members. Representatives of political parties who attend these forums do not communicate discussions to the rank and file of their members.

The E.C and other agents should devise more appropriate methods of public education. There is also the need for institutional collaborations between the EC, NCCE, NGO and other organization that are engaged in public education. The EC should play a coordinating and supervisory role over all organizations involved in voter education. This is more imperative with allegation that some organizations are considered to be partisan in their approach to public education.

5.2.5. Ways of Enhancing the Electoral Process in the Area

Open and continuous registration of voters will enhance voter registration as many people will be given the chance to register. The periodic registration of voters disenfranchises a lot of people. Besides easing the overcrowding and frustration during registration, continuous registration will afford more qualified voters the opportunity to register.

Biometric registration will help identify the true identity of voters thereby reducing double registration and impersonation. This can be done by a device that identifies the voter either by the eyes or fingerprints.

Mechanism to verify the age of voters is necessary to stop underage registration. It is believed that the National Identification Authority (NIA) civil registration currently going will establish accurate date of birth and ages of every citizen. The general excuses normally given by people that they do not have a birth certificate will be solved.

Continuous public education on the electoral process is crucial to public understanding and appreciation of the electoral process. This will reduce incidence of violence and irregularities that are normally associated with the electoral process.

Proportional representation system of electing parliamentary candidates will eliminate the notion of winner take all which turns electoral campaign to do or die event. The first-past-the-post electoral system also has the tendency of creating voters' apathy because party supporters may feel that their parliamentary candidates will never win.

The EC needs adequate funding in order to undertake its constitutional mandate effectively. The continuous registration of voters and public education will require adequate budgeting allocation from central government. The EC and its temporary staff should build the trust of the political parties through policies and actions. It is essential for the EC to establish a cooperative working relationship with political parties as well as other stakeholders.

5.3. Conclusion

Ghana has made considerable progress in multi party system of government. Independence was attained in 1975, through multi party system of government. Since 1996, military regimes and multi party democracy alternated up to 1992. With the introduction of the 1992 constitution, the country has achieved political stability. Five general elections have been held including two peaceful transfer of power from ruling government to another party.

From all indication, Ghanaians preferred democracy as a system of government to military rule. Multi party democracy is a political system marked not only by free and fair elections but also by rule of law, a separation of power, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property. Democracy allows citizens of a country to participate in choosing public office holders and hold them accountable. There are competitions for political positions in which all who are qualified are free to contest. Civil liberties allow people to criticize the government policies and offer alternative policies. Election is a major pillar in multi party democracy. Elections require that politicians compete for people's votes in an environment that is free from fear and intimidation. This will fosters peace and stability.

In recent times the electoral process in the Wa central constituency is characterized by conflict before, during and after voting. Insufficient stakeholders' involvement has resulted in protests over electoral boundary demarcation. Under age registration, double registration, shortage of forms and busing of people are events associated with registration exercise. Public understanding of the electoral process is low due to low public education. Act of coercion, intimidation and physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process is a threat to democracy in the constituency. Some of the election violence has root in religious and chieftaincy conflict. In an environment plagued by communal conflict political competition can rapidly degenerate into violence. Democracy is not viable in an environment with intense communal conflict.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made by the study to guide both policy and practice as far as multi-party democracy and the electoral process is concerned with specific reference to the Wa Central Constituency.

5.4.1. Level of Stakeholders Involvement in the Demarcation of Electoral Districts

Adequate consultation is necessary in undertaking any meaningful demarcation exercise. Broad base consultation will made stakeholders knowledgeable in the process so as to appreciate the exercise. It is important to identify all major stakeholders in the communities so as to get their views on demarcation. This will forestall the occurrence of resistance or disagreement.

Public education is vital to effective participation in demarcation. For effective understanding and participation the public need to understand the rules and regulations in the demarcation exercise. Public awareness and education will minimize misconception and reduce communal resistance.

There is the need to create more polling stations and other electoral structures at new settlements and distance communities to ease congestion and make voting accessible. Overcrowding at polling stations frustrate voters and delay counting of ballot papers. Some voters are discouraged participation in electoral activities because polling stations are far away from their communities.

5.4.2. Problems Associated with the Registration of Voters

Continues registration will ease overcrowding and frustration prospective applicants go through during registration. It will also afford qualified voters the opportunity to register than the periodic registration.

National identity card and biometric registration will reduce incidence of minors and double registration respectively. These which are common problems associated with the current registration process.

The Electoral Commission should collaborate with NCCE, information service and other organizations to do adequate public education. EC should play a supervisory rule in this regards so as ensure all institutions involved are giving the right message. It is important to involve the chief, religious leaders and opinions leaders in voter education.

Electoral Commission should find an appropriate ways of exhibiting the registers; sometimes the exercise is undertaken in the raining season. Chiefs, family heads, and unit committees' members should be contacted to get deceased members in the community for their names to be deleted.

5.4.3. Factors that Affect the Conduct of Elections and Election Outcome

EC should do a thorough back ground checks when recruiting election officials. This will ensure that neutral election officials are engaged. Election officials who are found to be partisan in the discharge of their duties should be sanctioned.

Public education should be stepped up to reduce rejected ballots. Voters are still unable to indicate their choices on the ballot papers correctly. Proper voters education as to how to mark the ballot paper could reduce rejected ballot papers during elections.

Political Parties should be sanctioned if they flaw the code of conduct as well as other laws governing the elections. People who commit electoral offences should be punished severely to serve as deterrence to others. Law enforcing agents should take necessary steps to forestall the occurrences of electoral violence.

There should be more inter party dialogue to create trust between the EC and political parties. Limiting this consultation to elections year is not creating the necessary cordial relationship and trust among the major stakeholders.

Conflict resolution mechanism should be put in place to resolve communal violence. Courts should speed up prosecution of electoral offences to create confidence in the court system. Security agents should arrest without favour all electoral offences. Enough security personnel should be deployed to violence prone areas to prevent electoral malpractices.

Proportional representation system should be adopted in the election of parliamentary candidates in the constituency. In this in system, some seats are contested on first-past-the-post and others given to political parties' base on a formula that will be agreed upon by the EC and others stakeholders.

5.4.4. Public Understanding of the Electoral Process

Government should resource state agencies responsible for voter education to undertake a continuous public education on the electoral process. It will also be more appropriate to organize communities' durbars and engage voter educators in all electoral areas. Modern public address systems and method of communication are required for effective communication. All these will require adequate state funding.

Institutional collaboration among E.C, NCCE and other agencies is crucial for effective public education. This will prevent the concentration of public education in some communities while others are not covered. EC should formulate the message and coordinate the activities of all institutions involved in public education so as to have a uniform message.

Political Parties should educate their members on the voting process. Discussion at IPAC, RIPAC and DIPAC should be communicated to political members. As an organization political parties should device a method of education their members on the electoral process. Some candidates and parties lose elections because the supporters are unable to indicate the choice correctly on the ballot papers.

In addition to the above, the media must avoid two things, which have been common practices in the past if they are to make a positive contribution towards achieving free and fair elections. One is unscientific opinion polling of candidate support. At present, none of the media establishments has the means and the requisite skills to do scientific opinion polling about national elections. The purported result of a contrived to bogus opinion poll about a candidate's support serves no useful purpose whatsoever. Rather, it can cause a lot of harm.

The second thing the media must avoid is the indiscriminate use of election language, such as fraud and rigging to refer to every kind of election irregularity. It is important to bear in mind that election observers use the word irregularity as a general term to refer to anything which is not done in strict adherence to the rules and regulations governing a particular election. For example, it will be noted as an irregularity if voting does not begin on time or if the polling station is not properly setup; but such irregularities may have nothing whatsoever to do with fraud or rigging.

The police establishment always has three important roles to play in the delivery of the conduct of an election. First, to check all forms of intimidation and keep the general peace in order to create the right atmosphere for democratic politics; particularly for the candidates to freely campaign and the voters to feel safe to participate in the elections; second, to keep order at the polling station on Election Day and finally, to arrest and prosecute people who break the election law.

Similarly, the courts of law have two important responsibilities. It is the responsibilities of the courts to try persons who break the election law and exact the appropriate punishment as a deterrent to would-be future offenders and to resolve disputes over electoral matters, including election results have tended to drag on endlessly in our courts. It may be desirable to set up a special tribunal after every major election, so that disputes over election results could be settled more expeditiously; preferably within a specified time frame and without undue resort to legal technicalities, bearing in mind the singular importance of the people's choice in a democratic election.

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