

## **The Effect of Card Readers on Election Credibility in Nigeria (A Case Study of 2015 Presidential Election)**

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**Abstract:** The real issue in the 2015, presidential election bore down to the use of the card reader machine, as a novel to the electoral System in Nigeria. The card reader was a critical component that distinguished the 2015 presidential election from other presidential elections so far conducted in Nigeria. This paper was predicated on verifying the credibility, authenticity, transparency and efficiency of card reader in the conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria. The use of the card reader generated debates among the party stakeholders before, during and after the 2015 presidential election. One of such debates was the legality for the use of the device. The paper argued that the use of card reader in the 2015 presidential election was right step in the right direction and marked laudable steps forward for Nigeria's democratic consolidation efforts and more importantly worked to stimulate and build trust among citizens in the electoral process. Although, there were many challenges as a good number of legible voters were disfranchised by the card reader for no justifiable reason. Notwithstanding, the author of this paper advocates for subsequent use of card readers in the future elections with improvement on the problems encountered in the 2015 presidential election.

**Key words:** Card reader • Democracy • Election • Malpractice • Technology • Credibility • Consolidation  
• Authenticity

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The use of card readers in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria has infused some level of innovation in Nigerian electoral process [1]. It was observed that when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) first announced its plan to introduce card reader for the March 28 and April 11 2015 general elections, many Nigerians, politicians in particular vehemently opposed it. They felt that the card reader machine could have been test -run prior to the general elections to ensure hitch free elections. Besides, they felt that the country has not developed to a level where such technology could be employed for elections without prior test.

Undoubtedly, the public outcry that greeted the planned use of card reader was enough to discourage Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from using it in the general elections. But because INEC has confidence in the efficacy of modern technology in achieving quick results, in addition to her vision of transforming the country's electoral process from its

analogue norms characterized by ballot boxes and multiplicity of ballot tomb-printing, INEC went ahead and used the technology against all hitches [2].

However, despite the imperfections of the technology, some observers in Nigeria and outside, that monitored the elections, are full of praises for the INEC insistence on the usage of card reader machines, pointing out that it is the best thing that has ever happened to the Nigeria electoral process. They have called on the general public to embrace it having tested its efficacy and urged the electoral empire to ensure card reader is used in the subsequent elections as a yardstick for achieving transparency and credibility in our future elections [3].

Meanwhile, election which is a process of choosing candidates into a public office is a critical component of any democratic setting. Nigeria first witnessed democracy after the actualization of its Independence (1960-1966) before the military intervention which led to the obstruction of the process till 1979 when civilian rule was restored by Obasanjo and in 1983 the military intervened again and eventually, Nigeria returned to democratic rule

and engagement which led to the conduct of its general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. General elections are elections conducted in the federation at large for federal and state elective positions [4].

Undoubtedly, the 2015 presidential election appears to be the most closely and keenly contested in the history of Nigeria elections because it was the first time four major opposition parties viz (ANPP, ACN, CPC and APGA) came together to form a formidable party, All Progressive Congress (APC) in order to challenge the preponderance and dominance of the ruling party (PDP) in the society. Indeed, according to [5], the election became the only game in town, shaping and reshaping public discourse and political actions. Before the 2015 general elections, a number of technological based reforms such as Biometric Register of Voters, Advanced Fingerprints Identification System were embarked upon by Independent National Electoral Commission under the leadership of Prof. Attahiru Jega. The election management body empowered by the 1999 constitution as amended of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to organise, undertake and supervise all elections in Nigeria.

However, despite the confidence of INEC in the use of card reader machine in the 2015 general elections, some challenges were inevitable even though the election was adjudged as being the best. For instance, during the March 28 presidential and National Assembly elections across the country, the card readers malfunctioned in several polling units, a situation that triggered undue delay in the accreditation process. While, in some polling units it worked perfectly well. The hitches ranged from rejection of permanent voters' card (PVC) by the card readers, inability to capture the biometrics from finger tips for instance the then president Goodluck Jonathan's finger tips were not captured by the machine, irregular capturing and fast battery drainage. INEC adhoc staff had to abandon their polling units and took the card readers back to INEC office for proper configuration. In order to salvage the situation, which was almost becoming frustrating, INEC ordered the use of incident forms which resulted in manual process of accreditation, but before the order-could go round the states and local government areas, it was already late to conduct accreditation and actual voting in some areas, a situation that forced INEC to postponed the exercise to the following day in all the affected polling units. Owing to the massive electoral malpractice witnessed in the past general elections in Nigeria, INEC announcement and subsequent deployment of the card readers in 2015

general elections was to ensure a credible, transparent, free and fair election in order to deepen Nigeria's electoral democracy. However, the use of the electronic device in the 2015 general elections generated debate among election stakeholders before during and after the elections [6, 7].

**Theme:** The 2015 presidential election was the closest electoral contest since the country's post- 1999 transition to multi-party democracy (International Republican Institute, 2015). The election is the most politically engaged in the history of electoral democracy in Nigeria. Huge resources were used for the elections including 120 billion naira expended by INEC, 750, 000 ad-hoc election staff with over 360, 000 security personnel. The presidential election was contested by fourteen candidates from different political parties. However, the candidates of the PDP (Dr Goodluck Jonathan) and APC (General Muhammadu Buhari) were the major contenders in the election [8].

The 2015 general election was the fifth general elections since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. Nigerians went into the general elections with renewed determination to exercise their voting rights and stood stoutly to monitor and protect their votes with anything and everything [9]. Though, the 2015 general election has come and gone. The election was bedeviled with issues that almost denied Nigeria and Nigerians the opportunity of voting in their representatives in government for another four years.

These issues almost affected the integrity, quality and management of the election. Indeed, quality election management is crucial to the sustenance of democracy. This is because, if the citizenry does not believe in the fairness, accuracy, openness and basic integrity of election process, the very basis of any democratic society might be threatened. This implies that public faith in the integrity of election system is a cornerstone of democratic government [10]. Therefore, a legitimate electoral process and public confidence in democratic governance depends on both the actual and perceived integrity of an election [11].

Therefore, this paper is set to examine the effect or impact of card readers on the election credibility in Nigeria, ascertain the reliability of the card reader during the electoral process, identify the challenges or limitations inherent in the use of card readers, security threats and election postponement and by extension examine the expiration of the INEC chairman tenure [12].

**The Impact of Card Reader on the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria:** A critical examination of the election showed that the introduction of card reader into the system generated fear in the mindset of politicians who have criminal tendencies and boosted public confidence and trust in the electoral process. The public confidence lies on the credibility and integrity of an election which the 2015 presidential election appears to have [13].

After the election, majority of Nigerians believed that their votes would count and as such their rights could be respected in future elections; and this has stimulated the legitimacy of democratic process in Nigeria unlike before. Undoubtedly, the machine checked the undemocratic attitudes of some politicians in polling booth such as stuffing ballot box with ballot papers, snatching of ballot box and reduced the number of multiple voting at polling-station which altogether constitute electoral fraud, or malpractice that had been the bane of Nigeria political system [14].

Coincidentally, litigations were reduced to the barest minimum as a departure from the past where every election outcome is being contested at the election tribunal. Most of the candidates that lost in the 2015 general elections did not challenge the outcome. Some of the major contenders that did not win in the election accepted defeat and congratulated the winners. For instance, the presidential candidate of PDP (Goodluck Ebere Jonathan) congratulated the APC presidential candidate (Muhammadu Buhari) the winner of the presidential election, the Ishielu and Ezza North (federal constituency) house of representative candidate of APC congratulated the PDP house of representative candidate the winner of the election. This attitude cut across states of the federation in the governorship and house of assembly elections [15].

Besides, electoral conflicts and violence was very minimal as the election was seen to be transparent and credible due to the use of the card reader. The excessive and pointless attacking and degrading between the election winners and losers in past electoral contest was significantly reduced. In view of the minimal level of electoral fraud due to the use of the card reader, tensions were reduced among the political gladiators and electoral violence diminished. Moreover, it strengthen the democratic institutions and increased Nigeria democratic capacity and by extension, made Nigerians and its institution to assimilate the knowledge needed to conduct credible, free and fair election so as to deepen our democratic process and protect our image abroad [16].

**Card Reader Machine and its Reliability in the Electoral Process:** It should be recalled that past elections in Nigeria had been bedeviled by desperate bid for political power by some stakeholders or political gladiators with vested interests in the Nigerian electoral process. Some of these stakeholders engaged in all forms of electoral malpractices including multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of results which had led to legal actions, electoral conflicts and violence [17].

Electoral frauds make the citizens to lose confidence in the electoral process; and lack of confidence by the citizenry in the democratic process is an impediment in deepening electoral democracy because if the citizenry does not believe in the fairness, accuracy, openness and basic integrity of the election process, the very basis of any democratic society might be threatened [18].

Electoral fraud according to [19], has more serious political implications, in that it allows a party or candidate to take over public positions contrary to the popular will. This weakens the democratic process and usually leads to electoral chaos, political instability and insecurity. The government of Cote d'ivoire, Peru and Serbia all fell in the year 2000 as a result of popular rebellions against fraudulent elections. Similarly, the so called "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004 caused presidential elections to be completely re-held after extensive fraud was demonstrated [20].

In view of the negative impacts of electoral malpractices, global attention is now focusing on how to mitigate this undemocratic behaviour and improve on the electoral process. One of such strategies to combat electoral malpractices is the introduction of information and communication technology into the electoral process. It was based on this assumption that card reader was introduced in the Nigeria electoral system in 2015 general election and it became the greatest innovative technology in Nigeria electoral system [21].

The card reader is a technological device setup to authenticate and verify on election day a permanent voter card (PVC) issued by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHZ and an Android 4.2.2. Operating System [15]. In other words, the INEC card reader is designed to read information contained in the embedded chip of the permanent voter's card issued by INEC to verify the authenticity of the Permanent voter's card (PVC) and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voter on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC [22].

The ability of the card reader machine to perform the aforementioned functions as well as keeping a tally of the total numbers of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server over a Global System for Mobile (GSM) network makes the card reader most welcome at this point in time in the nation's electoral history [23].

Among the fundamental basis for the deployment of the technologically-based device in the 2015 general elections by INEC was to mitigate electoral malpractice; to allow electoral votes count; to authenticate and verify voters; to reduce litigations arising from elections; to ensure the reliability, protect the integrity and credibility of the election; to audit results from polling units across the country; and to ensure accountability which are the basis of democracy.

Notwithstanding, irrespective of the laudable goals and objectives of the card reader, it generated debates among stakeholders before, during and after the polls. On the one hand, proponents of the card reader have viewed the innovation as a deliberate effort in ensuring the conduct of a free and fair election while on the other hand there have been arguments that INEC neither has the legitimate authority nor capacity to use the card reader [7].

The proponents of the device according to [8] believed that the card reader procedure has the capacity to prevent or minimize rigging in the sense that there wouldn't be multiple voting while the opponents believed that in the peculiar circumstances of the Nigerian situation, the card reader is designed to assist a certain political party to win the general election. [10], maintained that the major plank of their argument is that the card reader must have been programmed to assist a pre-determined winner of the election by ensuring that so many persons would discriminately be disenfranchised to deny other parties of favourable votes thereby ensuring the winning of an INEC preferred or pre-determined party. There is also the sentiment about the use of a faith based bank to transfer money for printing of permanent voters' card and the configuration of the card reader.

The bitter truth is that the arguments advanced against the use of card reader were not established. The assumption that card reader was designed to favour a political party turned out to be baseless, unfounded and malicious as the governments in power lose to opposition party.

**The Legality of the Use of Card Reader in the 2015 Presidential Election:** The legality of the use of card reader in the 2015 presidential election formed an

important debate that critics of the card readers contested. To examine this debate, a careful study of the Nigeria's electoral jurisprudence is needed to determine whether the use of the card reader by INEC falls within the confines of the law. Of course it is no longer subject of debate that INEC is a creation of the law as it is established under section 153 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) as a Federal Executive Body.

Under paragraph 15 of part 1 of the third schedule to the 1999 constitution (as amended), INEC is mandated to organize, undertake and supervise all elections in Nigeria, conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the registration of voters for the purpose of any election (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015). It is also empowered to carry out the functions conferred upon it by virtue of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended).

Furthermore, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre 2015 argued that section 118 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) subjects to the registration of voters and the conduct of elections to INEC's discretion while section 16 of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) gives power to INEC to cause to design, print and control the issuance of a voters card to voters whose names appear on the register. Therefore, according to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre 2015, INEC has express and implied powers to design means, procedures and processes that enable it exercise the powers granted to it under the constitution including for example, the use of permanent voter cards in 2015 general elections.

No doubt, the legal framework for the 2015 general elections empowers INEC to be the electoral umpire. However, sections 49 and 52 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) had been subjected to legal debate in respect to the use of the card reader for the 2015 general elections. To some, the deployment of card readers for the accreditation of voters at the elections tactically meant adoption of electronic voting, which the 2010 Electoral Act outlaws [6]. Section 49 states that:

Every person intending to vote shall present himself to a Presiding Officer at the polling unit in the constituency in which his name is registered with his voter's card. (ii) The Presiding Officer shall, on being satisfied that the name of the person is on the Register of Voters, issue him a ballot paper and indicate on the register that the person has voted. Section 52 stipulates that: (a) Voting at an election under this Act shall be by open secret ballot. (b) The use of electronic voting machine for the time being is prohibited. (c) A voter on receiving a ballot paper shall mark it in the manner

prescribed by the commission. (d) All ballots at an election under this Act at any polling station shall be deposited in the ballot box in the open view of the public.

According to [5] the deployment of the card reader by INEC is not illegal. He maintained that INEC has constitutional power to set the standards and guidelines for elections. In view of this, he argued that the card reader is part of accreditation and not voting. He stated further that what the law disallowed or proscribed is electronic voting and not the card reader. Therefore, to him the use of the card reader in the 2015 presidential election is legal and legitimate as [9].

The Society for Advancement and Protection of Public Rights [10], a civil society in its submission argued that the deployment of the card reader is illegal because it is in violation of section 52 (1) of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended). SAPPB opined that the use of the card reader for screening of voter cards which has the effect of preventing a registered voter to vote is beyond the powers of INEC. As such, the civil society maintained that by virtue of sections 77 (22) and 117 (2) of the 1999 constitution (as amended) of Nigeria, INEC had no power to deprive eligible Nigerians of the right to vote at the election [11].

On the wisdom of [2], he contended that electronic voting machine and the card reader are two different devices that are not necessarily deployed together for all purposes. He emphasized that a card reader is not an electronic voting machine but a machine to be used for accreditation of voters only before the actual voting. According to him, electronic voting requires no ballot papers whereas the 2015 general elections was ballot paper-based. He stated that what section 52(2) condemns as indicated earlier is the use of electronic voting machine but not the use of card reader for accreditation of voters.

He elaborated further that the use of the card reader is not proscribed. In view of this, he maintained that what is not prohibited is permitted by law. He cited the case of *Ojo Bolarinwa Theophilous vs. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012) LPELR-9846 (CA)*, where in the court of Appeal declared that "The basic canon of interpretation or construction of statutory provisions remains that what is not expressly prohibited by statute is impliedly permitted".

Thus, since the use of card reader for the purpose of accreditation of voters is not prohibited by the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), same is definitely permitted [6]. Besides, Banire argued that accreditation of voters is not the same thing as casting of vote as a person may be accredited without presenting himself to vote. The difference between accreditation and voting is

underscored according to him by section 49(1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). In order to separate accreditation from actual voting, he opined that the 2015 INEC Guideline and Manual for Election Officials provides that accreditation shall hold between 8:00am and 1:pm or such time as the last person on the queue finishes while, voting commences at 1:30pm or so soon thereafter when accreditation must have been completed till the last person concludes.

Citing section 52 of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended), Peters (2015) argued that the use of the card reader is illegal. Section 52 clearly stipulates that the use of electronic voting machine for the time being is prohibited. He maintained that INEC has in respect of the introduction of the card reader gone beyond its limits. He submitted that the card reader was only mentioned and introduced in the Electoral Manual 2015. Base on the adduced facts, as he stated, it is illegal and void because the ever green policy of the law is that where a statute provides a method of doing a particular thing, no other method would be accepted. He cited the case of *Ajuta 11 v. Ngene (2002)1 NWLR (part 748) at p.300 Para. C. Muhammead J.C.A* said:

*It has become trite that where a statute provides for the manner of doing a particular act, only that manner as provided by the enabling legislation would be acceptable. The doing of the act by a vehicle other than that provided by law for its attainment would be declared void.*

According to [17] every other requirement including the card reader outside the said section 49 (1) (2) of the Electoral Act that is contained in the Electoral Manual 2015 is illegal and void. He accused INEC of developing false confidence that it can do and undo under the cover of "an umpire" instead of pursuing the amendment of the law to accommodate the new invention (card reader). He advised that the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) be amended to bring in the card reader. Until it is done, he posited that the use of the machine is illegal.

He went further to say that the contradiction between the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) and the Electoral Manual 2015 where in the card reader was introduced for the accreditation process of the 2015 general elections. According to him section 49(1) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), mandatorily stipulated that an intending voter shall present himself to the Presiding Officer for accreditation processes. Contrary to this, the Electoral Manuals 2015 said the intending voter shall rather present himself to an Assistant presiding Officer (APO).

Peters [9] cited the Latin maxim - "expressio unius est exclusio alterius" - which means that the express mention of a name or thing in a statute excludes the applicability of the things or names not specifically mentioned therein. To that extent the absence of the name of Assistant Presiding Officer (APO) in section 49(1) of the Electoral Act underscored the position of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) that an APO has nothing to do with the accreditation process in our electoral system.

Despite the adduced illuminations why card reader should not be used in the 2015 presidential election, INEC went ahead to use it, on the ground that the electronic voting which the law prohibited in Nigeria is not the same as card reader, since the machine was designed for accreditation only and the end result was credible, free and fair election.

**Criticism, Challenges or Limitations Inherent in the Use of Card Reader in 2015 Presidential Election:** The use of card reader for the 2015 presidential election was criticized on the ground that its timing was too close for over a sixty eight million Nigerian voters. Considering the fact that the machine was relatively a novel technology that has not been tested in any election in Nigeria, it was therefore argued that INEC should step aside the device in the 2015 Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship and State House of Assemble elections.

This argument seems to make sense since INEC has not tried it in the previous elections even in the governorship elections conducted in some states like Osun state and Anambra state prior to the 2015; there was nothing like that so as to test its reliability, effectiveness and efficiency. Meanwhile, to address the issue of the card reader not been tested, INEC hurriedly conducted a test-run for the device on March 7, 2015 (21 days to the commencement of the polls) in twelve states (consisting of 225 polling units and 358 voting points) of the federation. Some of the card readers could not function effectively during the test-run. However, INEC promised to deal with the issue. This test-run exercise was carried out after the general elections were rescheduled. In order words INEC could have conducted the general elections without test-running the device but there test-run didn't make any impact since the problem noticed during the test-run was not corrected or fixed as promised. Besides, the test-run Nigerians meant were using the machine either in the Local Government Elections or Governorship Elections prior to the 2015 general election. Therefore the yearning of Nigerians was not met by the impromptu or fire brigade test-run approach of the INEC which added no value [10].

Despite the assurance given by INEC to address the issues that aroused with the card readers after the test-run, the device failed to deliver effectively and efficiently in a large number of polling units especially in the presidential and National Assembly Elections for instance in Aba South Local Government where I supervised out of sixteen polling units, only seven polling units' card readers functioned. Besides, the level of awareness among the electorates about the device was extremely poor. A large number of Nigerians especially the electorates in rural communities were un-informed. Many of them have neither seen nor heard of the card reader until the Election Day. There was a lot of misconception about the machine. To some of the electorates, the card reader was a voting device. This inadequate information dissemination and poor sensitization of the electorates on the card reader led to some poor human relations and unproductive behaviours between the un-informed electorates and the INEC adhoc staff [11].

Furthermore, the training given to the ad hoc and INEC staff who participated in the election was inadequate. Most of the Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers were not effectively trained on the proper use of the card readers and as a matter of fact, some of them contributed to the problem of the device because if you are not properly informed you cannot perform. In fact, there were imperfect practical demonstrations of how the card reader would properly be effective as in some cases one or two card reader(s) were provided for a class of fifty trainees. A large number of trainees did not have the opportunities of operating the device. In some few cases, those that received training were replaced with those that have no proper knowledge of the effective use of the card reader. All of these contributed to the poor handling of the machine during the elections to the extent that the protective film of some card readers were not removed thereby leading to the impossibility of the device to detect thumbprints in some cases.

There was also card reader breakdown during the election. Some of the devices didn't function on the day of the election, in spite the fact that INEC provided back-up in case of any card reader breakdown but some of the back-up did not function as well. Some card readers were unable to function due to blank screen, non activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device and low battery. Some INEC officials according to [18] attributed the failure of the card readers to INEC engineers who could not decode the inbuilt security installation in the card reader. The security code in the card reader is reportedly designed to update the

time and date of voting. One official claimed that the cards were initially programmed for February 14, that with the Postponement to March 28, some of the card readers had not been re-programmed [16].

On the other hands, some of the devices were confronted with the challenge of PVC authentication and biometric data verification of the voters in the polling units. The authentication and biometric data verification of voters were part of the accreditation process for the election. A number of the PVC issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated thereby disenfranchising some eligible voters in the elections. Wherein some voters' cards were authenticated, their biometric data could not be verified after several trials; and where it was verified, it was slow in some cases especially the fingerprints.

In Borno State for instance, ten percent of eligible voters' cards were authenticated and biometric data verified by the card readers at most of the polling units [16]. However, the inability of the device to capture the fingerprints of some voters was attributed to greasy or dirty fingers of the voters. In most cases, people had to scrub their hands on the ground just to ensure that the device recognize their finger prints [17].

Owing to the wide spread failure of the card reader, the then chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru Jega, changed the guidelines while, the election was on top gear and after millions of frustrated voters had gone home disenfranchised and approved the use of manual accreditation in areas that the card readers malfunctioned during the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the country. However the pronouncement of the aforementioned chairman appeared to have eased accreditation in many places. But this announcement may have inadvertently opened the flood gates for electoral fraud is yet to be fully analyzed [3]. It is quite unfair that the rules of the game were changed in the middle of the competition as a result of the inefficiency of the machine.

Coincidentally, since the rationale behind the introduction of card reader into Nigeria electoral process is to ensure transparency, credibility, free and fair election, INEC should co-opt stakeholders such as political parties, media, civil societies, National Assembly and the electorates should be properly educated. Information dissemination should be carried out through media so as to sensitize the general public on the need to key into the new technology in order to improve our electoral process and strengthen our democracy.

The issue of legality of the card reader should be addressed once and for all. The Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) should be amended to include the use of the

card reader for biometric verification of voters for the purpose of accreditation in future elections. INEC should as matter of urgency approach the National Assembly to amend the Electoral Act to include the use of card reader in the future legal framework.

Besides, both the INEC ad hoc staff and permanent staff should be properly and adequately trained in a conducive environment ahead of time in the future elections in order to give rooms for practical demonstrations of how to use the machine effectively and efficiently. The INEC should make enough card reader machines available during the training session to enable all the trainees to participate in the practical. All the trainees should undergo a mock test at the training and only those who passed the test should be employed for the job. The trainees should also be well paid and on time to serve as motivation to the work ahead of them [10].

The electorates more-especially at the rural areas should be educated by the INEC on what is expected of them on the election day. The INEC should also update and review the relevance or significance of the device to future elections in Nigeria since the issue of technology is on-going process. Therefore technological driven electoral process is a key to a credible, transparent, free and fair election and Nigeria should not take it for granted.

## **CONCLUSION**

The introduction of card reader in the 2015 presidential election was received with mixed feelings by the political gladiators, as some of them did not believe on the workability of the modern technology. While, some criticized it from the legal perspective claiming that the 1999 constitution of federal republic of Nigeria proscribed electronic voting.

Others argued that the device could have been tested in the previous elections conducted before the 2015 presidential election like the governorship elections in Anambra state and Osun state or even in the local government elections to ascertain the effectiveness of the machine than the fire brigade test-run approach conducted few weeks to the presidential election which created no impact as the problem identified could not be fixed by INEC before the election because of its proximity.

Notwithstanding, in spite the mixed feelings, the impact created by the use of card reader in the 2015 presidential election cannot be emphasized. This is because the rationale behind the deployment of the machine by INEC which was to mitigate electoral fraud and strengthen our democracy was achieved.

Though lack of trust or confidence, suspicion, alterations and unnecessary pressures among the stakeholders with vested interest created tension in the country but the fact still remains that the use of card reader in the 2015 presidential election marked laudable steps forward for the consolidation of Nigeria democratic polity and built trust among our citizens in the electoral process.

Based on this fact, I make bold to recommend the use of card readers in our future elections but INEC should fix those problems encountered in 2015, so as to enhance credible, free and fair elections.

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