

Challenges Associated with Ghana's Voters Registration Exercise

Dominic Alimbey Dery (PhD)

Department of Languages and Liberal Studies, Faculty of Applied Art, Tamale Technical University, Ghana

Abstract:-After over twenty five years of democratic governance and its attendant problems, it is eminent that there is still the need to research into the registration of voters to come out with best solutions to the challenges. The conduct of incontrovertible elections, to a greater extent, depends on the credibility of the voters' register. The voters' register is used for budgeting for election materials, determining the total votes cast and distributing of election materials to polling centres. It could be seen that the introduction of administrative, statutory and technological reforms in the registration processes and procedures to check to challenges of the voters' register.

Key Words: Challenges, Ghana's Voters' Register

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of a credible voters register has always been a huge challenge for Ghana's Electoral Commission. The reasons being: bloated register (full of ghost names), multiple registration and the registration of minors. However, there is no gainsaying that the conduct of incontrovertible elections, to a greater extent, depends on the credibility of the voters' register. The voters' register is used for budgeting for election materials, determining the total votes cast and distributing of election materials to polling centres. It could be seen that the introduction of administrative, statutory and technological reforms in the registration processes and procedures to check to challenges of the voters' register.

Voter Registration is the process of compiling prospective voters' particulars to produce an Electoral Roll called the Voters' Register. For an election to be free, fair, transparent, credible and incontrovertible there must be a Voters' Register which is complete and acceptable to all stakeholders. This could be possible if the Voter Registration process was free from all challenges.

II. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Voter Registration System consists of the institutions responsible for registration of voters, the voter registration legal framework, the stakeholders in the voter registration processes, the interconnected voter registration processes and procedures leading to the production of the final voters register, and the methods used in the voter registration.

As said by Astrid Evrensel voter registration is highly complex and is the single most expensive activity within the framework of elections. He also stated that voter registration is not just the technical implementation of an activity; it is a holistic political, administrative and practical process and role

of voter registration is especially important when it comes to emerging democracies: it can make or break an election. The quality of the process and the product – that is, the voters' roll – can determine the outcome of an election and consequently the stability of the democratic institutions in a country.

In 1988/9 the then National Commission for Democracy (NCD) undertook a registration exercise to compile a voters' register. Registration assistants went to house to house, market places, offices, and hospitals to register applicants. This was done to ensure that every qualified applicant was reached.

At the end of the exercise, the resultant register was flawed with numerous challenges such as, multiple entries in the same register, a voter having his/her name in more than one register, voters not finding their names in the register and ghost entries. These flaws together produced a bloated register with serious consequences for future elections notably the 1992 and presidential and parliamentary elections.

With lessons from the 1988 exercise the Electoral Commission (EC) designated places it considered appropriate as a registration center for the purpose of registering voters in 1995. These centers were also used as polling stations on Election Day. In the 1995 voters registration exercise, about 20,000 registration centers were used. It was decided to have each center manned by a team comprising a registration officer, two assistants, and a camera person for photo areas. The registration officer received and interviewed the applicant to ascertain his/her eligibility. The applicant's demographic information is captured on a form. The applicant must provide the following information; name, age, sex, voters' street and home address, home town, and parents' names. Still the Voters' Register (VR) was flawed with serious challenges.

Chapter seven (7) Article 42 of the 1992 constitution, states "Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purpose of public elections and referenda". This statement gives a right to register and vote and so registration as a voter and participation in public elections and referenda in Ghana are voluntary. The Electoral Commission (EC) in 1995 made a regulation CI 12 a Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulation 1995 to regulate registration of voters in Ghana.

However, before 1995 and the beginning of the 1988/89 exercise, registration data was collected in the field. The data

was carried to Accra at EC Head Office for a team of over hundred data processing staff to key them into a national database. This was done with difficulty and a lot of delays. Using this procedure, error was very high. In 1995 it would have been impossible to compile a computerized voters' register by the above traditional means within the six months following registration as required by the electoral laws. As a result, the commission decided to use Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) scanning technology. The OMR technology would allow the Electoral Commission to produce the register within the legal time limit and at a low cost than the traditional method.

III. METHODOLOGY

My research methodology gathered relevant data from the field and the specified documents in order to analyze the material and arrive at a more complete understanding voter registration challenges of some selected voters, opinion leaders, political parties representatives and voter registration officials in Kumbungu District in the Northern region. I shed light on the following questions through my research: Why should parents allow the children below 18 years to register as voters? What can parents do to stop their children from registering as voters? What role do party agents play to prevent unqualified persons from going through the voter registration processes? What mechanisms exist in checking minors and non-Ghanaian citizens registering during voter registration exercises? Whether the mode of capturing voters' data contributes to multiple registration and mistakes on the final voters' register? The research was a descriptive survey through which views and opinions were sampled from registered voters (electorate). This descriptive study describes the patterns of voter registration processes challenges occurrence and other election-related issues by the electorate. The descriptive survey was further considered the most appropriate design for conducting this study since it is the one that deals with things as they currently are (Creswell, 2003). Again, information gathered from the descriptive research can be meaningful or useful in diagnosing a situation since it involves describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting conditions that exist.

This research utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools.

The sample was chosen from the voter population of the following Electoral Areas (EAs) in the Kumbungu District: Gamprisiya; Dalung; Bogu; Gumo; and Zangbalung. The sample size was seventy seven (77) comprising five (5) Assembly Members; ten (10) Opinion Leaders; ten (10) Males and ten (10) Females from the five electoral areas; ten (10) Unit Committee Members; twelve (12) Registered Political Parties Representatives; and twenty (20) registered voters.

Holloway and Wheeler (2002:128) assert that sample size does not influence the importance or quality of the study and note that there are no guidelines in determining sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers do not normally

know the number of people in the research beforehand; the sample may change in size and type during research. Sampling goes on until saturation has been achieved, namely no new information is generated (Holloway 1997:142).

The following types of sampling were used by the researcher: The following sampling techniques were used in getting the sample size.

Purposive and systematic sampling method techniques were used for selecting the participants for the study. The political parties' representatives were purposively sampled because they were in key positions in the electoral activities. As major stakeholders in the management of electoral administration, they have information about the challenges confronting the voter registration processes in Ghana. The political parties' representatives were made up of New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), Convention People's Party (CPP), and People's Conventional Party (PNC). Creswell (2002) stated that, in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand a phenomenon. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) cited in Avoke (2005) also assert that purposive sampling enables researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality. In this way, the researcher built up a sample that was satisfactory to specific needs.

However, systematic sampling method technique which provides participants with equal opportunity to be randomly selected was used to select the five (5) Assembly Members; ten (10) Opinion Leaders; ten (10) Males and ten (10) Females from the five electoral areas; ten (10) Unit Committee Members; twelve (12) Registered Political Parties Representatives and twenty (20) registered voters. They were selected at random. The researcher made a head count of three and randomly selected one amongst them. Systematic sampling method was used here because the researcher wanted the sample method to be free from preconception and unfairness. The instruments employed to collect data were questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The use of multiple data collection instruments ensure validity and reliability of data generated through triangulation.

As already stated, questionnaire was used for the study. As the researcher desired to collect factual information on factors contributing to registration of Minors, Non-Ghanaians and ineligible persons in general, closed and open questionnaire was developed to collect data for the research questions stated. According to Francesca Alby a questionnaire is a series of written questions a researcher supplies to subjects, requesting their response. Close-ended questions according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) are quick to compile and straight forward to code, and do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are.

Semi-structured interview was conducted for the Unit Committee Members while that of Assembly Members was one-on-one basis on different dates scheduled by both the

researcher and the participants. Creswell (2002) defined an interview survey as a form in which the researcher records answers supplied by the participant in the study. Ary et al (2002) also posits that an interview is used to gather data on subjects' opinions, beliefs, and feelings about the situation in their own words.

To establish a close relationship with the respondents, the Returning Officers used in the 2012 general Election and some teachers in the communities were used to collect the data. The questionnaires and interviews were administered simultaneously to respondents and responses taken on the spot. This ensured a hundred percent (100%) returns. The researcher assured respondents of confidentiality and their informed consent. According to Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia (2003), these are the most important ethical issues to adhere to when conducting a survey. Also, they were assured that all information obtained would be used for the intended purpose.

The data collected was analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics which allowed the researcher to use numerical values to represent scores in the sample. According to Borg and Gall (1983) descriptive statistics not only allows the researcher to use numbers but also provides the researcher with data that allow for inferences on the population and directions for answering the research questions. The returned questionnaires were scored and coded for analysis and answering of the research questions. An item-by-item analysis of data was conducted. The percentage of the total sample responding to each question was given. The data was presented according to the responses and/ or the views of the respondents. Numerical scores were assigned to them to indicate possible relationship in responses of the respondents and then frequency lists were drawn. Also, tables were presented with descriptions and discussions of some major aspects that addressed the research questions raised.

The interview data was analyzed using content analysis which according to Krueger (1998) is comparing of the words used in the answers of the respondents.

Concerning documents, voter registration challenged cases on multiple registrations, registration of minors and non-Ghanaians and impersonations during the 2012 biometric voter registration exercise in the Kumbungu District were studied and analyzed.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey covered the age range of respondents from 20 and above. Seventeen (17) respondents (both males and females) fell within the age bracket of 20-30 representing 22.08%. Twenty seven (27) respondents fell within the age bracket of 31-40 representing 35.06%. Twenty (20) respondents fell within the age bracket of 41-50 representing 25.97%. Thirteen (13) respondents above 51 years of age was the lowest representation with 16.88%. The respondents who had the highest representation in the survey fell within the ages of 31-

40 and 41-50 representing 35.06% and 25.97% respectively. These are the active age groups in every socio-political activity in any community in the Kumbungu District.

TABLE 1.0 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	M	M%	F	F%	M+F	(M+F)%
20-30	10	12.99	7	9.09	17	22.08
31-40	15	19.48	12	15.58	27	35.06
41-50	11	14.29	9	11.69	20	25.97
51+	8	10.39	5	6.49	13	16.88
TOTAL	44	57.14	33	42.86	77	100.00

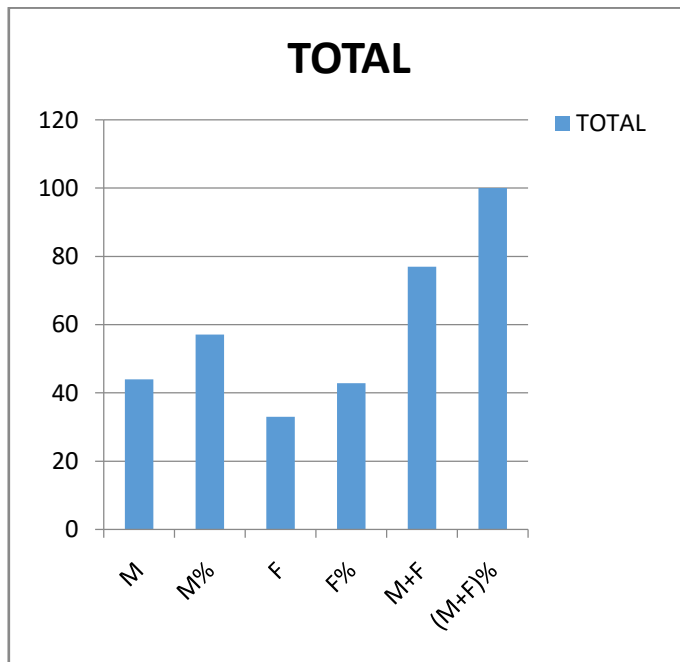
Source: survey data February, 2018

TABLE: 2 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

GENDER	M	M%	F	F%	M+F	(M+F)%
TOTAL	44	57.14	33	42.86	77	100.00

Source: survey data February, 2018

Fig. 1.0 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS



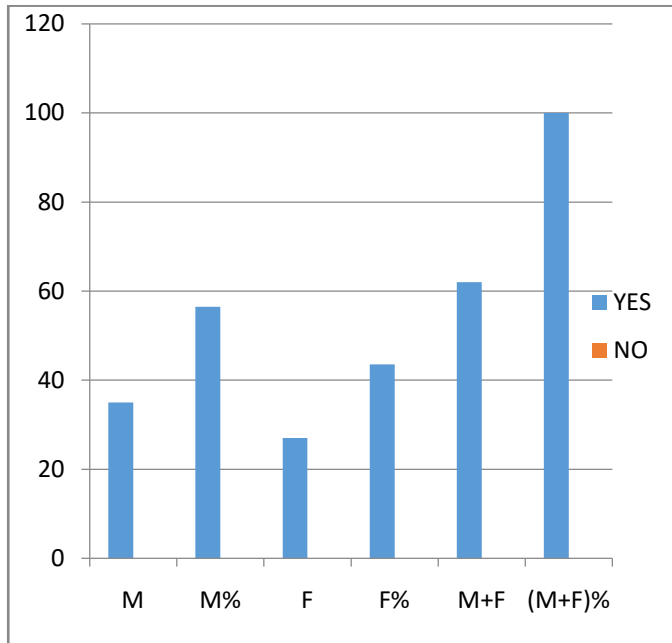
Source: survey data February, 2018

Voter Registration Status:

The Closed and open questionnaire was administered to sixty two (62) respondents. All the sixty two (62) respondents interviewed were registered voters. A total of (100%) which thirty five (35) males representing 56.45% and twenty seven (27) females representing 43.55% responded that they are

registered voters. They also responded that they registered in 2012 biometric voter registration exercise as registered voters.

Fig: 2 REGISTERED VOTERS OF RESPONDENTS



Source: survey data February, 2018

Challenges Respondents Went Through

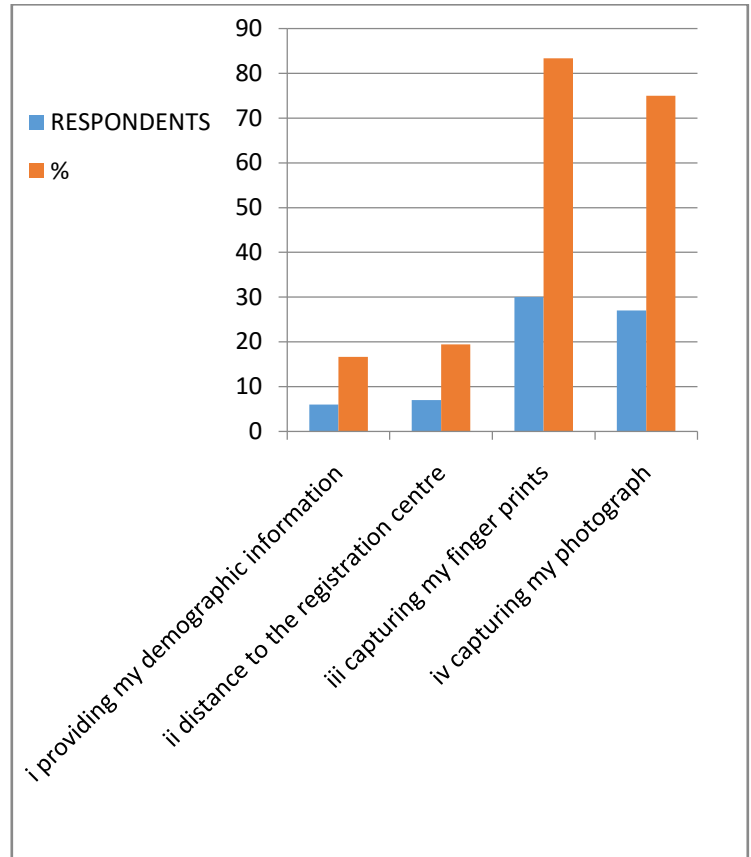
Nineteen (19) males representing 30.65% said they went through some challenges as against seventeen (17) females representing 27.42%. Six (6) respondents (16.67%) out of the thirty six (36) who said were not successful through BVR processes said they went through the challenge of providing their demographic information. Seven (7) (19.44%) out of the (36) respondents said the travelled long distance to the registration centres. Thirty (30) (83.33%) out of the (36) respondents said they went through the challenge of capturing their finger prints and twenty seven (27) (75.00%) out of the (36) respondents went through the challenge of capturing their photographs.

Table: 3 TYPES OF CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES	M	F	M+F	M+F (%)
(i) providing my demographic information	2	4	6	16.67
(ii) distance to the registration centre	3	4	7	19.44
(iii) capturing my finger prints	17	13	30	83.33
(iv) capturing my photograph	10	17	27	75.00

Source: survey data February, 2018

Fig: 4.3 TYPES OF CHALLENGES



Source: survey data February, 2018

Shortage of Registration Materials At The Centre:

All the sixty two (62) respondents who answered this question representing 100% said they did not experience shortage of any registration material at the registration centre.

Why Minors Register As Voters:

From the analysis of the interview results, it was a general opinion of the Assembly Members (AM) and Unit Committee Members (UCM) that some of the children register to vote on Election Day.

.... They go to the registration centres without the knowledge of their parents and guardians. (Verbatim expression; from two Assembly Members and nine Unit Committee Members)

On the issue of do some people encourage them; all the respondents gave an affirmative response.

Responses to who encourage them, five Unit Committee Members and three Assembly Members mentioned politicians. They mentioned polling station executives and constituency executives who go round to observe the registration exercise.

Why Non-Ghanaians Register As Voters:

Responses from the fifteen (15) respondents stated that the non-Ghanaians want to become Ghanaians because some of them have stayed with us for long. Some of them are our Fulanis who have stayed with us taking care of our cattle.

Whether they (respondents) know that any registered voter can vote and be voted for in any election. They gave different responses. Ten (10) UCMs and four (4) AMs said “the non-Ghanaians can vote for somebody who is a Ghanaian but cannot contest any election in Ghana.” This meant that the respondents had a limited understanding of importance of being a registered voter. In a response to a prompt question that who encourages the non-Ghanaians to register as voter all the fifteen (15) respondents said politicians encourage them to register.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings made so far from the study suggest several important conclusions. Seven fundamental issues were raised to solicit the view of respondents on registration of minors, non-Ghanaians and multiple registrations.

It was apparent from the findings that, the voters’ register used in the 2008, 2012 and 2016 general elections was bloated with deceased persons’ names, minors, multiple registrants and non-Ghanaians.

However, over sixty (60) percent of the respondents interviewed were of the opinion that parents and politicians encouraged multiple registrations, minors and non-Ghanaians to register as voters.

From the findings there was inadequate voter education on the electoral laws. Most the respondents interviewed did not know the electoral laws that govern some of the electoral activities such as voter registration and elections in general.

Also, the finding revealed that fifteen (15) respondents representing 24.19% out of the sixty two.

(62) respondents went through some challenges during the 2012 BVR exercise.

A greater number of the respondents 58.06% found the BVR processes not successful. They agreed that challenges were found in the following areas: (i) providing their demographic information; (ii) registration centres far away from their places of abode; (iii) difficulty in getting their fingerprints captured; and (iv) difficulty in capturing their photographs.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Election System, chapter 2 “Voter Registration,” August 2001, available at <http://www.tcf.org/Publications/ElectionReform/99>.
- [2]. Rafael LópezPintor and Maria Gratschew; *Voter Registration and Inclusive Democracy: Analysing Registration Practices Worldwide*
- [3]. Administration and Cost of Elections Project (ACE). 1999. International IDEA, IFES, UN-DESA, www.ace-project.org.
- [4]. Bartolini, S. 2000. Franchise Expansion. In International Encyclopedia of Elections, edited by R. Rose. London: Macmillan.
- [5]. Dr.KwadwoAfar-Gyan, www.todayghana.com (Saturday, 17 November 2012)

- [6]. The Carter Center International Election Observation Mission to Cote d’Ivoire; Report on Voter Verification, Claims, and Objections of Provisional Voters List November-December 2009.
- [7]. Evrensel, Astrid; *Voter Registration in Africa A Comparative Analysis*
- [8]. Alina Rocha Menocal; Why electoral systems matter: an analysis of their incentives and effects on key areas of governance
- [9]. Jean, Laponce and Bernard Saint-Jacques; *For Contrasting Political Institutions special issue of the International Political Science Review Vol 18(3) July 1997: 297-312.*
- [10]. The Carter Center; Observation Mission to Ghana’s 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections; December 2008 – January 2009; Final Report
- [11]. A, KWASI; *The Ghana 2008 Elections Growing Pains Of A Budding Democracy*
- [12]. D. A. Kangah and K. Sarfo-Kantanka Deputy Chairmen, Electoral Commission, Ghana, *-Getting The Register Right: The Ghana Experience*
- [13]. Australian Electoral Commission. *Continuous Roll Update (CRU) Procedures Manual*. 2002.
- [14]. Australian National Audit Office. *Australian Electoral Commission: Integrity of the Electoral Roll*. Report of the Australian National Audit Office. Canberra, 2002.
- [15]. Bakary, Tessa, and Susan L. Palmer. *May 17, 1997 Legislative Elections in Cameroon*. Washington, D.C.: IFES, 1997.
- [16]. Bayer, Thomas C. *The Ivory Coast, Voters Registry Revision and Elections Preparation: A Technical Assessment*. Washington, D.C.: IFES, 1994.
- [17]. Black, Jerome H. “From Enumeration to the National Register of Electors: An Account and an Evaluation.” *Choices* Vol. 9, no. 7 (August 2003).
- [18]. ———. “The National Register of Electors: Raising Questions About the New Approach to Voter Registration in Canada.” *Policy Matters* Vol. 1, No. 10. Montréal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, December 2000.
- [19]. Butler, David. “The Case for an Electoral Commission: Keeping election law up-to-date,” King-Hall Paper No. 5. London, U.K.: Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government, 1998.
- [20]. Butler, Vic, and Joe Baxter. *Report on Issues in Preparation for the 1999 General Elections in Malawi*. Washington, D.C.: IFES, 1998.
- [21]. Caltech-MIT Voting Technology Project. *Voting: What Is, What Could Be*. California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Corporation, 2001, www.vote.caltech.edu/reports/2001report.htm.
- [22]. Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. *Canada’s Electoral System: Strengthening the Foundation*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996, www.elections.ca/loi/ref/strength_e.pdf.
- [23]. *Modernizing the Electoral Process: Recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada following the 37th general election*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 2001, www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=rep/r37&lang=e&textonly=false.
- [24]. Carroll, David, et al. *Civil and Voter Registration and Identification System: Proposed Implementation System*. Washington, D.C.: IFES, 1995.
- [25]. Carty, R. Kenneth. “Citizens, Electors, Voters and Parties in Canada, or the Case of the Missing Voters’ List.” *Registering Voters: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. John C. Courtney. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1991.
- [26]. Choe, Yonhyok. *How to Manage Free and Fair Elections: A Comparison of Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom*. Göteborg, Sweden: Göteborg University, 1997.
- [27]. Chowdhury, Jafar Ahmed. *Voter Registration and Identity Cards in South Asian Countries*. Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1997.
- [28]. Courtney, John C., ed. *Registering Voters: Comparative Perspectives*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1991.

- [29]. Courtney, John C., and David Smith. "Registering Voters: Canada in Comparative Context." *Democratic Rights and Electoral Reform in Canada*, Research Studies of the Royal
- [30]. J. Shola Omotola *Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria Under the Fourth Republic*
- [31]. MashakaLewela and Emmanuel Kisiangani, *Research Intern and Senior Researcher, Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis Division, ISS Nairobi*
- [32]. Nwokeke P. Osinakachukwu. *The Electoral Process and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*
- [33]. Astrid Evrinsel; *Voter Registration in Africa: A Comparative Analysis*, (EISA)
- [34]. Michael Yard; *Civil and Voter Registries: Lessons Learned from Global Experiences*, (, IFES)
- [35]. The Ace Electoral Network And The: *Electoral Integrity*
- [36]. *Hirst v the United Kingdom (No 2)*, [2005] ECHR 681, [2006] 42 EHHR 41
- [37]. U.K., Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act (Northern Ireland), 2002 Chapter 13
- [38]. Elections New Zealand, *Everything You Need to Know About Enrolling to Vote*
- [39]. Royce Crocker , Specialist in American National Government ;*The National Voter Registration Act of 1993: History, Implementation, and Effects -September 18, 2013*
- [40]. Politics of Wednesday, 21 November 2012 **Source:** GNA *Blame Party Agents for registration of minors-EC*
- [41]. Carter and Ford: *National Election Commission, Report of the Task Force on the Federal Election System, chapter 2 "Voter Registration," August 2001, available at http://www.tcf.org/Publications/ElectionReform/99_full_report.pdf.*
- [42]. Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, *GHANA PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS* ,7 December 2012.
- [43]. R. Michael Alvarez ,(Professor of Political Science, Co-Director, Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project, June 17, 2005) *Voter Registration: Past, Present and Future ,Written Testimony Prepared for the Commission on Federal Election Reform*
- [44]. Rafael LópezPintor and Maria Gratschew, *Voter Registration and Inclusive Democracy: Analysing Registration Practices Worldwide*.
- [45]. Voters register is bloated - CDD-**Thursday 30th November, 2006**
- [46]. Wendy Weiser, Michael Waldman, and Renée Paradis- *Universal Voter Registration Policy Summary -Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law*.
- [47]. James G. Gimpel, Joshua J. Dyck and Daron R. Shaw; *Election-Year Stimuli And The Timing Of Voter Registration*.
- [48]. Jacob R. Neiheisel1 and Barry C. Burden; *The Impact of Election Day Registration on Voter Turnout and Election Outcomes*.
- [49]. RANDALL D. LLOYD Eastern Kentucky University; *Voter Registration Reconsidered Putting First Things First Is Not Enough*.
- [50]. ROBERT RICHIE; *Leave No Voter Behind: Seeking 100 Percent Voter Registration and Effective Civic Education*.
- [51]. Robert A. Pastor, Robert Santos, Alison Prevost, and VassiaStoilov; *Voting and ID Requirements: A Survey of Registered Voters in Three States*
- [52]. Harder and Jon A. Krosnick- Stanford Universi- *Why Do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of Voter Turnout Joshua Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 64, No. 3, 2008, pp. 525—549*
- [53]. Anamika Ajay and Unna V. Govindarajan; *Revisiting the Urban Electoral Processes A Case for Electoral System Index in Bangalore; Environment and Urbanization ASIA 2(1) 109–128 © 2011 National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) SAGE Publications Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC DOI: 10.1177/097542531000200108 <http://eua.sagepub.com>*
- [54]. Barry C. Burden and Jacob R. Neiheisel; *Election Administration and the Pure Effect of Voter Registration on Turnout Political Research Quarterly 66(1) 77 –90 © 2013 University of Utah Reprints and permission: sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav DOI: 10.1177/1065912911430671 prq.sagepub.com*
- [55]. James G. Gimpel, Joshua J. Dyck and Daron R. Shaw; *Election-Year Stimuli And The Timing Of Voter Registration*.
- [56]. Elizabeth A. Bennion and David W. Nickerson; *The Cost of Convenience: An Experiment Showing E-Mail Outreach Decreases Voter Registration;Political Research Quarterly 64(4) 858 –869 © 2011 University of Utah Reprints and permission: sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav:DOI:10.1177/1065912910382304 <http://prq.sagepub.com>*
- [57]. Electoral Commission of Ghana; *Biometric Voter Registration; Registration Officials Manual*.
- [58]. Electoral Commission of Ghana; *C. I. 72 Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations 2012*
- [59]. *An excellent recent examination of the history of voter registration in the United States is by AlexnaderKeyssar, The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States, New York: Basic Books, 2001*