

CULTURE OF VOTE BUYING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS: RANGE OF INCENTIVES AND CONDITIONS POLITICIANS OFFER TO ELECTORATES

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ABSTRACT: *Each election year and in almost every local and institutional elections the issue of vote buying surfaces. Vote buying has almost become part of every election in Ghana. While the menace is on the increase, it is unclear whether votes bought translate into votes for the buyer or the buying party. This work sought to investigate the range of incentives and conditions politicians give to electorates. Sequential mixed-method design was employed for the study. Data from questionnaire was triangulated with interviews. The target population for this study consists of the entire group of potential voters in Shama District in the Western Region who were 18 years and above. Five (5) communities or electoral areas in the district were selected for the study. These communities were Atwereboanda, Komfueku, Beposo, Nyankrom and Shama. A sample size of three hundred (300) was chosen for the quantitative (questionnaires administered) aspect of the research while twenty of them were purposively selected for the qualitative (interviews conducted) aspect of the study. Two party activists were also interviewed to support the data. Non-probability (convenience, proportional and purposive) sampling techniques were employed to select the district, communities and respondents for the study. The study revealed among other things that: (a) Items that are used to buy votes include silver pans (basins), cloths, gas cylinders, laptops, money, outboard motors, wellington boots and party branded items; and (b) During vote buying, conditions are not actually attached to the incentives except where there are doubts that one wants to take the incentive without reciprocating with his/her vote. Enforcing laws on vote buying by all stakeholders including the police, the judiciary, the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) and resolving to fight corruption among leaders who also use all means to make money to engage in vote buying would go a long way to solve the menace.*

KEYWORDS: Culture, Election, Ghana, Politicians, Vote Buying, Voting Conditions, Voting Incentives

INTRODUCTION

One of the pillars that support every democracy is elections. Elections seem to have become a major factor in the stabilization and democratization of emerging democracies. It forms an important pillar that places the power to govern with the people. To Boafo-Arthur (2006) elections are important to a nation's construction and the electorates since it performs the role of a litmus test for democratic institutions. It ensures that democratic pillars including rule of law, ballot secrecy, separation of powers, independence of the judiciary and many more are strengthened.

Elections therefore allow citizens to take part in governance. Thus, elections give the citizens the opportunity to select their leaders. Electorates use elections to evaluate how leadership or governments have excelled in all facets of national life such as education, economy,

agriculture, corruption, standard of living and others. It is therefore a cardinal process through which power is allocated, and representative democracy is actualized.

Elections and more specifically voting are important mechanisms for selecting leaders for political offices in every democracy. They aggregate preferences, help select better public officials, and provide incentives for politicians to act in the interest of the voters they represent (Persson & Tabellini, 2000) since it is through elections that candidates are able to appeal and explain their intended policies to electorates before they are voted into power.

Chazan (1987) identifies two main functions of elections in the world and particularly in Africa that is whether to change a regime and its leadership or to seek approval from the electorates to enhance democratic and constitutional transition. Several countries in the world currently select their national leaders through multi-party elections. However, in some developing countries especially in Africa, the quality of elections still varies widely as elections have been plagued with problems such as ballot fraud, intimidation, multiple voting, low voter education, snatching of ballot boxes, violence, giving out of electoral incentives or buying of votes and others (Stokes, 2005; Schaffer, 2007; Vicente, 2008; Kramon, 2009).

Just as democratic elections have spread across the globe since the early 1970s, so has electoral incentives and buying of votes. Vote buying has been widespread in many countries that have continued along the path towards democracy. In the words of Vicente (2008), vote buying happens frequently in many parts of the world.

Indeed, vote buying which in some literature is referred to as clientelism has a long history. The use of electoral incentives to buy votes has been a frequent practice during electoral campaigns and elections in several developing and developed countries. It was prevalent in the Roman Republic (Yakobson, 1995), Britain and the United States (O'Leary, 1962) and the phenomenon still remains common around the world (Schaffer, 2007). Scholars have documented widespread use of these campaign strategies in countries such as Nicaragua (Gonzalez-Ocantos, Jonge, Mel'endez, & Nickerson, 2012), Argentina (Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes, 2004; Stokes, 2005), Taiwan (Wang & Kurzman, 2007), and Lebanon (Corstange, 2010), as well as African countries like Sao Tome and Principe, Nigeria (Bratton, 2008; Vicente, 2008), Kenya and Ghana (Kramon & Posner, 2013). For example, Hicken, Leider, Ravanilla and Yang (2017, p. 9) account from their paper "Temptation in vote-selling: Evidence from a field experiment in the Philippines" that:

"Typically, each voter in a household will be offered a packet with their name on it, and campaigns track who accepted and who did not. Candidates may also engage in a second round of vote buying if they learn that a challenger is offering more money than they are. Campaigns seek to ensure that voters clearly associate the gift with their candidate. For example, the candidate's flyer may be stapled to packages of food handed out to voters or cash may be attached to flyer or letter from the candidate. Most commonly, candidates distribute money attached to a sample ballot, and encourage voters to take the ballots with them to the polls as a guide. The sample ballot includes not just the candidate's name, but also allied candidates from other races up and down the ticket."

Vote buying appears in different forms in every society. It may take the form of direct payments to voters. To Schaffer and Schedler (2005), vote buying in its literal sense, is a simple economic exchange. Candidates "buy" and citizens "sell" votes, as they buy and sell apples, shoes or television sets. He adds that the act of vote buying is a contract, or perhaps an auction, in which

voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Parties and candidates who offer material benefits to voters may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market exchange.

Other forms may include offering of employment before elections, giving out of gifts, provision of social infrastructure to communities on the “last minute” and conditional promises to individuals upon the election of a candidate. Kramon (2009) is of the view that political parties employ certain strategies to buy the votes of electorates. The strategies may focus on demobilizing active opponents or on mobilizing passive supporters. The former is often described as “negative” vote buying or “abstention buying”, while the latter may be considered as “participation buying.” These strategies may be intended to refrain electorates from casting their votes or ensure a high turnout but how the parties choose amongst the strategies when offering electoral incentives or buying votes remain a great question.

During the distribution of these ‘goodies’ or ‘freebies,’ political parties and politicians target or consider two specific issues. One of these two major factors political parties consider in buying votes is the type of voter one is. Cox and McCubbins (1986) identify three types of voters; core supporters, swing voters and opposition backers. Thus, in every electoral system, these three major groups of voters can be identified and they form the persons that are targeted during vote buying. Schaffer & Schedler (2005) identify the second factor as they assert that, vote trading propositions may target either electoral choices or electoral participation. They may be intended to persuade individuals to vote in certain ways, or to vote or not to vote in the first place.

Existing literature and theoretical perspectives have identified three dominant arguments to explain the foundations of vote buying in elections. First it is argued that socio-economic factors, especially poverty, unemployment and illiteracy play a major role in promoting the market for votes in democracies. Second, it is argued that the voting methods in a particular electoral system may also guarantee the predominance of vote buying during elections. The third explanation is predicated upon the belief that vote buying is a product of the nature of partisanship and party organization in a particular state (Onapajo, Francis & Okeke - Uzodike, 2015).

Vote buying is frowned upon in every democracy. It raises questions about the quality of democracy. Neeman and Orosel (2006) identify three types of arguments that are usually made against the practice. First, they argue that because vote buying gives wealthier individuals an unfair advantage, it violates the principle of equality. Second, they argue that votes belong to the community as a whole, and should therefore not be alienable by individual voters. Third, there is a concern that votes buying may promote inefficiency. This is because the interests of some voters are bought by parties before the election, and their needs or interests may therefore be ignored by political representatives after the election. Buying of votes is also frowned upon in most economies. This is because once a nation becomes user-friendly to vote buying and vote selling; it ceases to be in the best books of foreign multinational companies seeking to invest in developing countries.

The occurrence of vote-buying, understood as incentives or gifts given to voters before elections in exchange for their votes is a corrupt electoral practice. The phenomenon seems to obstruct democratic processes, yet remains pervasive in many developing democracies. Vote buying is a threat to the conduct of quality elections. According to Akwetey (2016), electoral fraud, corruption and unfair practices bring the reliability of the electoral process into question.

It affects the legitimacy of the elected officials. He adds that the practice often leads to mistrust, violence and conflicts, while robbing citizens of their need for expected peace and development.

Africa has not been an exception to this phenomenon as scholars and election monitors document extensive gift giving in many African elections. A study conducted during the 2007 election campaign in Kenya found that parliamentary candidates spent an average of 40 percent of their budget on the distribution of material benefits to voters before the day of election [Coalition for Accountable Political Financing (CAPF, 2008)].

There has been a widespread of this canker in a sense that many African elections have not been centred on issues or policy accountability. This has possible marked consequences for economic development since it is normally done through the giving out of electoral incentives. In a democracy, an election campaign is supposed to be a peaceful and open discourse of persuasion. Ideally, candidates compete for popular support by presenting reasoned arguments about why they are most qualified for election to office. They stake out rival positions about programmes of public goods, all the while being tugged towards the median voter at the centre of the political spectrum (Downs, 1957). Voters then choose the contender whose policy positions most closely resemble voters' own set of preferences.

Ghana as a country returned to democratic rule in the year 1992 after years of military rule. A number of political parties have cropped up since then and a number of elections have been conducted in the fourth republic. Two major types of elections are held in Ghana. These are general (presidential and parliamentary) and district assembly and unit committee elections. Every four years Ghanaians go to the polls to elect a president and members of parliament for the various constituencies in the country. Upon the death or resignation of a member of parliament, bye-elections are held to replace a member of parliament in the course of the four year mandate. Again, elections are also organised two years after the presidential and parliamentary elections to elect assembly members and unit committee members. All these elections have been fraught with allegations of distribution of electoral incentives that aim at buying the votes of electorates. Vote-buying seem to have become the norm of the day both in the national and internal party elections. The problem stem from the fact that, there is high rate of poverty among the voting populace. This notwithstanding, since ballots are meant to be secret, voters can simply take the incentive and vote as they wish, though it can generate a difficult commitment problem between a vote seller and vote buyer.

While the party system is relatively institutionalized, Ghanaian elections are competitive and reports of vote buying (the issuing of electoral incentives to voters) surface in every election including internal party elections. Kramon and Posner (2013) recount that cash and other types of handouts, which are often referred to as "chop money", are common to political campaigns in Ghana. There are ample evidences that vote buying is real and not imagined in Ghana. The phenomenon is so widespread in Ghanaian politics that from schools, universities to local internal party elections the practice is very common to the extent that some voters sometimes receive gifts from multiple parties. Hicken cited in Kramon (2011) opines that the greater the extent to which voters receive multiple gifts, the lower the expectations of political support in return might be.

Again, civil institutions and stakeholders of elections in Ghana such as the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD, Ghana), Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and Coalition of Domestic Observers (CODEO) through workshops and reports from pre-election surveys

towards the 2012 and 2016 general elections have provided evidence on vote buying. These institutions have warned of the threat the phenomena poses to Ghana's democratic process since each election year, politicians and political parties are accused of distributing electoral incentives to voters.

It is alleged that in Ghana, politicians sometimes attach conditions to these acts of vote buying. There have been reports that indicate voters who benefit from the electoral incentives are sometimes made to swear in the name of a deity in order to compel voters to honour their part of the agreement. It is also alleged that some voters are also asked to disclose the candidate they voted for with evidence of taking a photo of their ballots before they are paid for compliance. These acts undermine ballot secrecy as enshrined in electoral laws and the constitution of Ghana.

Over the years the country's democracy has been under serious threats due to illegal activities by politicians to buy the votes of electorates. It is widely believed that politicians allocate public resources in ways to maximize political gains. Politicians face intense pressure to provide gifts in exchange for votes. Ghanaian politicians face pressure to allocate private benefits to voters, often at great personal expense. Nugent (2007) notes that voters expect to be showered with gifts as evidence that the candidate genuinely does have the interests of the local people at heart. However, failure to do so sends a negative signal to voters.

Political parties in the nation have one way or the other offered incentives to buy votes from electorates. Evidence from pre-election surveys conducted by CDD Ghana towards the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections as well as other elections in Ghana suggest that a great deal of vote-buying occur in the days and weeks leading up to the elections. Allegedly, the electoral incentives range from contracts, employment, community projects (such as roads and schools), vehicles, gas cylinders, cash, building materials, outboard motors, motor bikes, laptops and others. It is unclear where the funds for these incentives come from but it is perceived that governments use state resources to purchase these incentives and buy votes hence, the high expenditure that exceed government's planned budget for election years.

Vote buying does not just occur; sometimes electorates demand for the incentives from politicians and sometimes politicians also give to the electorates from their own will. For instance, in Ghana a group of people might be compelled to ask or request for "chop money" from a visitor (candidate) or someone who visits and declares his/her political ambition and asks for their help or support from the people. Again, opinion leaders, chiefs and elders of localities and communities may take advantage and outline the problems or challenges the community or locality faces such as drinking water, poor roads or school from a candidate for his/her assistance. On the other hand, in other instances in Ghana, visiting an elderly person with a gift is a cherished value. It signifies acceptance and opens doors of acceptance for the stranger or visitor. A visitor presenting a gift to a person or a group of people is a sign of welcome to the visitor. Hence, visiting a person for the first time and presenting him/her with a gift allows the visitor to be given attention and be welcomed. It is upon this premise that sometimes politicians want to present electorates and communities with incentives. Vote buying carries different meanings to different people. These meanings can vary not only by class, but also by religion, ethnicity, levels of education and the like. In the view of Schaffer (2008), they can lead to unhappy consequences.

Ghana practises the universal adult suffrage which allows all qualified adult citizens of sound mind and having attained the age of eighteen years and above the right to vote in all general

(presidential and parliamentary) and district assembly and unit committee elections. Leading up to these elections, it has always been alleged that Ghanaian politicians distribute incentives and gifts including motor bikes, construction materials (especially roofing sheets and bags of cement), outboard motors, mobile phones, t-shirts, food items and cash to electorates. Certain communities also benefit from “last minute” projects which allegedly include roads, school buildings, electricity and toilet facilities. This practice which is usually called “vote buying” and meant to coerce voters to vote or not vote for certain candidates and political parties is assuming an alarming rate.

Despite the prevalence of this phenomenon, understood as the exchange of incentives for votes before elections, it is unclear whether these actually translate into higher votes for the distributing candidate/party or whether there is a relationship between vote buying and the decisions and choices of voters. This notwithstanding, there has been ample evidence from pre-election surveys conducted by CDD that candidates do target certain voters with gifts and incentives. This study therefore sought to investigate the range of incentives and conditions politicians give to electorates during elections. The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: (1) What are the range of items used as incentives to buy votes of electorates?; and (2) What are the conditions politicians attach to vote buying incentives?

This study shall be of great significance to all stakeholders of elections in Ghana. It shall provide useful information to government, parliament, the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and other civic organisations such as Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and CDD about the dangers of vote buying to the country’s democracy. Besides, it shall provide information to all stakeholders of the law enforcement bodies about the threat the practice poses to the nation’s democracy and ways of curbing the menace. The study was delimited to culture of vote buying incentives and conditions attached. It was further delimited to Shama District out of the twenty-two (22) districts in the Western Region of Ghana.

CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES OF VOTE BUYING

Several attempts have been made by writers and researchers to define the concept of vote buying. This is because vote buying carries different notions in different countries depending on the country’s historical, cultural, political aspects and its election models (Schaffer, 2007).

One of the most cited definitions on vote buying is from Etzioni-Halevy (1989, p. 287) who defined vote buying as “the exchange of private material benefits for political support.” The definition stresses on gaining private material benefits by voters in return for their political support. In other words, it is about giving voters some benefits in the form of gifts or incentives for them to reciprocate with their votes by voting for the giver or the candidate. In effects, voters are given items for their private use and they are expected to return this gesture from candidates or political parties by voting for them. She sees this act as an exchange in the sense that the materials are given to the electorates in anticipation that the electorates would consider the gift received and vote for them.

Similarly, Fox sees vote buying as “exchanging political rights for material gains” (Fox, 1994, p. 151). His focus is on the right of a person to exercise his/her franchise. His definition, also stresses on an exchange which is also seen as a transaction. Thus, selling one’s right by

accepting a gift, incentive or benefit to vote for a candidate or a political party. To Fox (1994), the aspect of exchange between the material benefit and the political support is more significant than the objective of the exchange.

Bryan (2005, p. 4) also defines the concept as “the use of money and direct benefits to influence voters.” While the first two definitions did not actually focus on the use of money, Bryan specifically includes money in his definition. His definition, unlike other existing literature does not restrict vote buying to only money but includes other materialistic items like food. In this instance, electorates are given money and other direct benefits to manipulate their decisions. Thus, they are given these items to influence their decisions or choices at the polls. Again, voters are also given these direct benefits and may be expected to abstain from voting. Thus, to vote in a particular way or not to vote.

Brusco, Nazareno and Stokes (2004) also explain vote-buying as a transaction whereby candidates distribute private goods such as cash and gifts in exchange for electoral support or higher turnout. The focus here is for voters, especially party supporters and swing voters to turn out in their numbers and vote for the party. In this case, they see vote buying as the giving out of cash and other material items such as building materials, food and liquor for electorates especially party supporters to go out in their numbers and vote for the party. Effectively, electorates are paid solely to turn out and vote for the distributing party. The number of electorates who turn out to vote for a candidate is important in understanding people’s political participation. This definition sees vote buying as a transaction (where there is a bargain and an agreement) or a trade. In the view of Schaffer and Schedler (2005), the logic of trade demands that: (a) the actors involved (buyers and sellers) engage in effective exchange of money for goods or services. In the absence of mutual exchange, if buyers do not pay or sellers do not deliver, the act is not considered as trade but instances of fraud or robbery. To them, the logic of commercial transactions further demands that: (b) buyers and sellers understand what they are doing: that they enter a reciprocal relationship of exchange. In other words, if voters accept the money, but vote as they had planned to do anyway, they do not take part in an act of exchange. They are not selling their votes, but earning unilateral gains. In their view, voter turnout gives the election management body an idea about the image of the authority in the eyes of the electorate. It can give it cause to assess its election processes to eliminate steps that hinder turnout and improve its organization of elections with the introduction of other workable measures to lure eligible voters to the polling centres during elections.

Again, Schaffer and Schedler (2005) posit that if we embrace a literal understanding of the term anchored in the world of economic exchange, we may define the purchase of votes in the electoral arena as a market transaction in which parties, candidates, or intermediaries pay (in cash or kind) for “electoral services” delivered by individual citizens. They identify the electoral services to be either a favourable vote or a favourable abstention. They see vote buying as a market exchange and in their view; the commodity that changes hands in the acts of vote trading carries a well-defined institutional meaning. To them, in the vote buying transaction, electorates can be engaged to offer electoral services. These services may require supporters and swing voters to go out in their numbers and vote for the party while they are rewarded for the services. The services may also target opposition supporters by paying them to refrain from voting. To them, votes are formalised expressions of preference by individual members of decision-making bodies.

They identify two types of barriers that may impede the buying of votes. Thus, objective and inter-subjective barriers. With objective barriers, seller compliance is uncertain, since vote

buying is an illicit business and as such does not take place within a “normal” market protected by social and legal norms. On the inter-subjective side, the electoral practices that are described as “vote buying” may carry different meanings in different cultural contexts (Schaffer & Schedler, 2005).

Schaffer (2007) shares a similar view when he explained vote buying as a situation in which small material goods such as money or food are distributed to voters, right before an election in the hopes of receiving their vote. To him, a vote buying incentive has a monetary value. Again, he does not see vote buying to involve only money but other materialistic items. In this wise, electorates are enticed with or are given money, food or other items to vote for a particular party or candidate. From his definition, one receives the incentive before the person performs his/ her part of the contract. This is given to the voter before going to the poll.

In the nutshell, while some cultures and literatures restrict vote buying to the handing out of cash for votes, others also extend vote buying to the distribution of materials for votes. As Schaffer (2007) puts it, political operatives frequently hand out not just cash, but also a wide range of goods and services such as bags of rice, chickens, whisky, clothing, soccer balls, viagra, haircuts, and teeth cleaning.

A vote buying incentive may or may not carry the same meaning for a giver or a recipient (Schaffer, 2002). Voters may have different interpretations for vote buying incentive. This is because some distributors may not directly tell a receiver the purpose of giving the gift or the incentive. In the light of the above, an incentive intended by an operative as binding payment may be understood by the voter as non-binding gift (Schaffer & Schedler, 2005). Nugent (2007) asserts that voters’ knowledge on vote-buying is based on their views or perceptions about vote buying practices.

It is therefore important to explore the range of meanings vote buying incentives or gifts may hold, not only to givers, but to recipients as well. The giving out of vote buying incentives conveys a positive message to some voters. On the other hand, the lack of it sends a negative signal to others. Nugent (2007) is of the view that the failure to distribute material resources while on the campaign trail is perceived that the candidate (whose wealth and lifestyle are often different than his constituents) is out-of-touch and does not understand the needs of the poor constituents. Indeed, failure to buy votes in this setting is a dominated strategy when others are doing so.

Kramon (2011) in his paper “Why do politicians buy votes when the ballot is secret?” posits that vote buying signals a willingness and capacity to deliver small private goods which tend to be more highly valued by poor voters. In other words, politicians buy votes because of the information it conveys to voters about their credibility with respect to the provision of targeted, particularistic or patronage goods to poor voters. He sees vote buying to signify credibility as a patron for the poor and as a candidate who understands the needs of poor constituents. He adds that a candidate who is willing and able to finance widespread vote buying during a campaign is perceived to be more likely to provide poor constituents with targeted benefits in the future.

Bratton (2008) in his paper “Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns” asserts that vote buying enhances partisan loyalty. Parties may offer incentives or benefits to core supporters during elections to sustain electoral coalitions. This is explained from the fact that the distribution of incentives to party supporters is a recognition and affirmation of their

membership to the party. This stabilizes the support base of the party, by ensuring that party supporters do not defect to or vote for the opposition as Gans-Morse, Mazzuca and Nichter (2009) put it, unless operatives provide particularistic benefits, supporters may become swing or opposition voters during the next election. It also encourages them to turn out on election day to vote for the party. In other words, it eliminates apathy among supporters. In effect, parties may distribute rewards to voting supporters to prevent the erosion of partisan loyalties over time.

The conceptual framework for this study is deduced from the General Incentive Model which was developed by Clark and Wilson in 1961. They posit that if we know the kinds of incentives that an organisation may give to induce members' greater cooperation, then something can be learnt about the incentive system a political party uses to sustain members' participation in its activities. Clark and Wilson (1961, p. 130) pointed out that the internal and external events of organisations may be explained by understanding their incentive systems. They add that all organisations in good standing must provide "tangible or intangible incentives" to their members to induce their optimal contribution.

In the use of incentives to buy votes of electorates, politicians often use monetary and non-monetary incentives to coerce voters. These incentives are usually targeted on the poor or less educated class of opposition backers to not turn out and vote which is referred to in this model as 'negative vote buying, swing voters and a party's main supporters to turn out and vote which are also referred to in this model as 'turnout buying' (Cox & McCubbins, 1986). While negative vote buying reduces votes for the opposition party, turnout buying increases votes for the party buying votes.

Vote-buying incentives provide goods which are short-term, private, and have a high degree of certainty (Desposato, 2007). Because of this, poor voters assign higher values to vote-buying where uncertainty of the compensation for their vote is low (Desposato, 2007). Two main purposes are intended to be achieved during the distribution of these vote buying incentives. These are to ensure positive or participatory vote buying and also to achieve negative turnout.

The poor and less educated among electorates are almost always the target during the distribution of vote buying incentives. This is attributed to the fact that gifts have more force among the poor. Hence parties will buy the votes of the poor before trying to buy those of the wealthy (Stokes, 2005). For example, the poor who finds a cedi on the street will be made happier by finding it than will a wealthy person. This is due to diminishing marginal utility of income. For instance, Bratton (2008) reports that during Nigeria's 2007 elections the most common amount of money offered to voters was US\$4. These economic mechanisms are likely to make poor voters the prime targets of vote buying by political parties who want to maximize their (re)election chances. It follows that the same outlay of resources by the party will buy more votes among poor than among wealthy voters.

In a nutshell, vote-buying can be a greater motivation to the poor to vote than the enticement of public goods, as the poor are oftentimes forgotten about in the distribution of public goods. Desposato (2007, p. 104) says "poor voters, on average, should have higher utility for immediate private goods than for delayed public goods." Moreover, unless a voter has an alternative source of income and simply did not need the incentive, it is unlikely that poor voters will therefore be able to resist vote-buying incentives (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros & Estevez, 2007).

The various variables highlighted in this framework are interlinked and cannot be addressed in isolation. These variables or requirements stated are very critical to the success of the model.

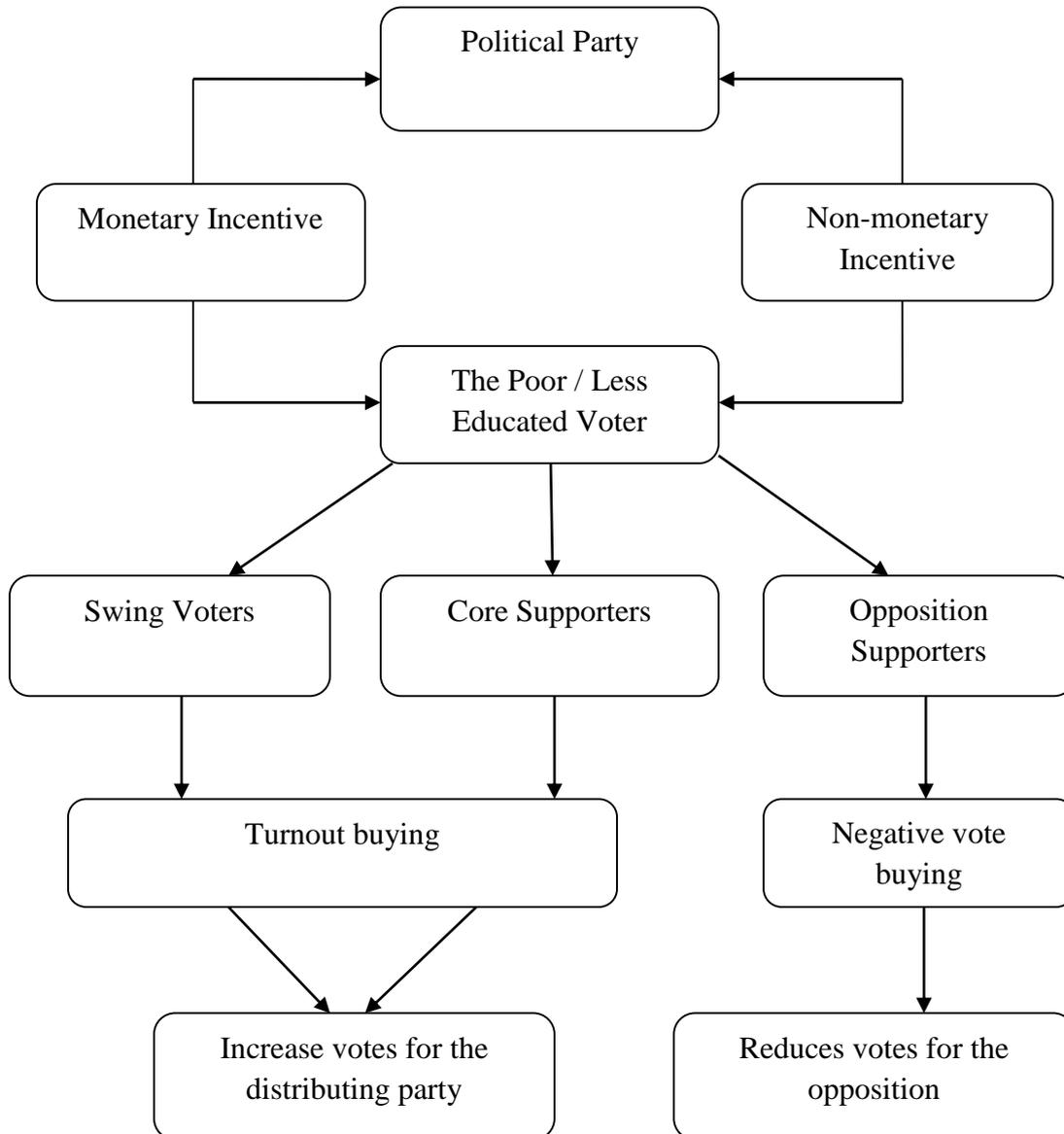


Fig 1: Conceptual Review

Source: Schaffer & Schedler (2005)

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the mixed method approach which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methodological approaches in collecting data. In the words of Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p. 17-18) the mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative

methods) are “those that combine the quantitative and qualitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multiphase study.” The combination of the two research approaches offer a good benefit on the study of which either could have on the work (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Sequential mixed method research design was employed. This was guided by the research questions.

The population for this study was made up of the entire group of potential voters in the Shama District in the Western Region who were 18 years and above. Five (5) communities or electoral areas in the District were selected for the study. These communities were Atwereboanda, Komfueku, Beposo, Nyankrom and Shama. Information from the District Electoral Commission indicates that there were a total of 12,101 registered voters in these five communities. The communities are scattered but can be easily identified in the district. Questionnaires and interviews were administered in all the five communities selected for the study.

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) approximate a sample size of 300 for a population above 12,000. In this wise, a sample size of three hundred (300) was chosen for the quantitative aspect of the study. Three hundred respondents were tasked to respond to the questionnaires, while twenty of them were purposively selected for the qualitative study. Two party activists were also interviewed to support the data.

Three sampling techniques were employed for the study. Convenience sampling was adopted to select Shama District. Again convenience sampling was employed to select the five communities, namely: Atwereboanda, Komfueku, Beposo, Nyankrom and Shama. Proportional sampling technique was employed to select the three hundred (300) respondents as there was differential numbers of registered voters in the selected communities. Proportional sampling technique was employed to ensure that the five selected communities have a fair representation in the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants. The basic requirement used in the sampling was that a participant was to be of eighteen years and above. Potential voters in these communities were used as the sample for the study. Four (4) of those who responded to the questionnaires from each of the five selected communities were purposively selected and interviewed for triangulation purposes. Two party agents who took part in the distribution of vote buying incentives were also interviewed to authenticate the information given by participants. The breakdown of the population according to the communities that formed the sample is as follows:

Table 1: Sample size according to communities

Community	Population	Sample
Atwereboanda	274	6
Komfueku	1,446	35
Beposo	1,963	48
Nyankrom	429	11
Shama	7,989	200
Total	12,101	300

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

The main instruments employed for the study were questionnaires and interview guides. The instruments were triangulated to test for consistency of findings. Justification of the triangulation technique was that as vote buying is secretive and sensitive, and survey and interview responses are subject to response bias (Kramon & Posner, 2013), the researchers employed questionnaires and interviews to cross-check the responses given on the questionnaires for authenticity. To do this, personal coding was done on the questionnaires to give clue. This was anonymous because of research ethics. Twenty respondents were selected to go through the interview. The essence of this was for triangulation.

The researchers employed the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods for the data analysis. The quantitative data were derived from survey in the form of questionnaires, while the qualitative data were derived from interviews. The quantitative data entry and analysis was done by using SPSS analytical software. It was edited, coded and analyzed using table of frequencies and percentages. The qualitative analysis was also done through content analysis based on themes arrived at from the interviews. Content analysis is a process of deriving meaning out of the responses got through interviews (Patton, 2002).

The responses were described and explained in the form of narratives. Sometimes responses were quoted verbatim to authenticate claims made. The responses were answers to open-ended questions. Koul (2000) quoted Patton (1982, p. 28) on this issue as expressing the view that “responses from open-ended questions in the form of direct quotations reveal level of emotions of respondents, the way in which they have organised their world, their thoughts and experiences about certain happenings and their perceptions.” Quantitative data were tabulated, organised, analysed and interpreted to draw sound conclusions and generalisations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Analytical Outcomes

This section gives the overview of the demographic data of the respondents in the study area. It presents the distribution of participants by gender, age, academic qualifications, professional status and level of income. A sample size of 300 potential voters was used for the study; however 280 which represent 93.3% of the questionnaires were retrieved.

The study sought to find out whether there was any significant difference in respondents' sexes. The distribution of potential voters by sex shows that 148 (52.9%) of the respondents were males, while the remaining 132(47.1%) were females. This means that there were 16 (5.8%) more male respondents in the study than female. This discrepancy in the distribution of potential voters by gender could be ascribed to the fact that, generally, more potential male voters were willing to take part in the study than potential female voters.

Age range of respondents indicates that 50 (17.9%) of the respondents were within the ages of 18 to 20 years. Seventy-six (76) representing (27.1%) of the respondents were of 21 to 30 years. Sixty-two (62) potential voters forming 22.1% were within the ages of 31 to 40 years. Thirty-three (33) or 11.8% were within the ages of 41 to 50, whereas 27 (9.6%) were found to be within the range of 51 to 60 years. Again, 31 (11.1%) were between the ages of 61 and 70. Only one (0.4%) of the respondents was above 70 years. The results indicate that most of the respondents were within the ages of 18 and 40 years. The implication of the majority within the productive population which is the age bracket of 18-40 indicates that they would have to

be sensitized to be aware of the threat of vote buying on Ghana's democratic society. If this is done, the productive population will be an anchor for good ideals when it comes to elections for the young and growing population to learn from.

Educational qualification of respondents shows that out of the 280 respondents that submitted their questionnaires, 23 (8.2%) had no formal educational qualification, whereas 58 (20.7%) had basic education. Seventy-eight (27.9%) had senior high school educational qualification, 15 (5.4%) had a professional, training or vocational education. Twenty-six (9.3%) had diploma certificates, 62 (22.1%) had tertiary degrees, while the remaining 18 (6.4%) had other educational qualifications. The results show that most of the respondents were senior high school graduates. The implication here is that majority could read and write. It is therefore reasonable that they could make informed decisions based on the questionnaires and interviews administered to them.

Occupation of respondents shows that 30 (10.7%) were unemployed, 55 (19.6%) were students or apprentices. Thirty-nine (13.9%) were farmers, another 39 (13.9%) were traders or engaged in businesses, artisans constituted 19 (6.8%), whereas 3 (1.1%) were fishermen. Fifty-six (20.0%) were civil servants, whilst other occupations constituted 39 (13.9%). The outcome implies that majority of the respondents were civil servants.

Respondents' levels of income shows that out of 280 respondents, 101(36%) of them were on income level of less than two hundred (200) Ghana Cedis (GhC). Fifty-three (18.9%) were within the income ranges of GhC200.00 to GhC 350.00. Thirty-four (12.1%) were within the income ranges of GhC 351.00 to GhC 500.00. Nine (3.2%) were within the income ranges of GhC 501.00 to GhC 750.00. Thirty-four (12.1%) fall within the income range of GhC 751.00- GhC 1,000.00, whereas 49 (17.5%) were on an income of more than GhC 1,000.00 per month. The outcome means majority of the respondents were on income of less than GhC 200.00 per month. The implication here is that such people are likely to be influenced with monetary and other incentives during electioneering campaigns and election days to select their leaders.

Range of Items Used as Incentives by Politicians to Buy Votes of Electorates

This section deals with the culture of vote buying. The section assesses the respondents' ideas on whether they have received an incentive from political parties before. It also considers the range of incentives used to buy votes from electorates.

Gifts / incentives distribution between males and females shows that 94 (33.6%) of the respondents have once received a gift or an incentive from a political party. This is made up of 44 (29.7%) of males and 50 (37.9%) of females. One hundred and eighty-six (186) representing 64.4% of the respondents which is made up of 104 (70.3%) of males and 82 (62.1%) of females have never received an incentive or gift from a political party. This results indicate that, approximately a third of the total respondents have been exposed to vote buying incentives.

Out of the total of the 20 participants interviewed, five which represent twenty-five percent confirmed having received a gift/an incentive from a political party. This means that about one third of the respondents have ever benefitted from vote buying incentives. On this note, Akwetey (2016) asserts that it is very dangerous for the country's young democracy and warns of a possible collapse of Ghana's democratic system if vote buying is not stopped. This is similar to Kramon's findings in his 2013 dissertation "Vote buying and accountability in

democratic Africa' which reported that close to 30 percent of adults report receiving cash handouts in Nyanza and Eastern Provinces of Kenya.

Outcome of the item on knowledge of someone who has benefitted from an incentive from a political party shows that 49 (17.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that they know someone who has benefitted from an incentive from a political party. Sixty-two (20.1%) disagreed, 89 (31.8%) agreed, while 80 (28.6%) strongly agreed with the statement. From the interview conducted, participants just named and pinpointed neighbours in their community who had benefitted from these incentives. Others even went ahead to name what those beneficiaries were given. This is an indication that more of the respondents know people who have ever benefitted from a vote buying incentive from a political party. This also indicates that more people are becoming aware of the vote buying practices in the Ghanaian electoral system.

Outcome on the number of times of receiving incentives is discussed here. The statement is based on - *I have received a gift or an incentive from the same party more than once* indicates that 49 (17.5%) strongly disagreed, 66 (22.1%) disagreed, 81 (31.8%) agreed, while 80 (28.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. This indicates that more than half of the respondents have received gifts from the same party more than once.

The second item which is - *I have ever received gifts from multiple parties* which tries to find out whether a respondent has received an incentive or gift from a party more than once indicates that 163 (58.2%) strongly disagreed, 91 (32.5%) disagreed, 15 (5.4%) agreed, while 11 (3.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that majority of the respondents have received incentives or gifts from only one political party.

The outcome of the issue of specifications of gift received as an incentive for vote buying is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Range of items received as incentives from political parties.

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
No incentive	41	14.6
Unspecified	6	2.1
Silver pan (Basin)	8	2.9
Food	1	0.4
Cloth	9	3.2
Cloth/ money	2	0.7
Cutlass	3	1.1
Gas cylinder	12	4.3
Laptop	3	1.1
Money	84	30.0
Outboard motor	2	0.7
Wellington boot	7	2.5
Party branded items (‘T’ shirt and others)	102	36.4
Total	280	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

From Table 2 out of the total of 280 respondents, 6 (2.1%) of them who received incentives from political parties did not specify the incentive they received. Eight representing 2.1% of

the respondents received (silver pans) basins, 1 (0.4%) was given food, 9 (3.2%) received cloths, 2 (0.7%) benefitted from cloth and money and 3 (1.1%) were given cutlasses, 12 (4.3%) received gas cylinders, 3 (1.1%) had laptops, 84 (30.0%) were given money, 2 (0.7%) were given outboard motors, 7 (2.5%) were given wellington boots, while 102 (36.4%), were given party branded items ('T' shirt and others). In an interview, greater number of the participants identified cutlasses, gas cylinders, cloths, silver pans (basin), money, and party branded items among other things as the items they received from party officials. Gifty (real name withheld) a farmer indicated that "The party officials came here in their cars. They gave me cutlass, wellington boots and a box of matches that contained 20 Ghana Cedis."

It can be deduced from the outcomes from Table 2 and the interviews that items used as vote buying incentives ranged from party branded items, silver pans (basins), cloths, gas cylinders, laptops, food, money, cutlasses, outboard motors and wellington boots. Again from the data, party branded paraphernalia tops the list, followed by money as items often used by politicians in buying votes. This bears some similarity with CDD's findings in their 2016 pre-election survey on Ghana's 2016 elections titled "Prospects for credibility and peacefulness" as they also identify money, food and other material items as part of the items used to buy votes. CDD's findings also affirm that money is the item often used in vote buying as they identify cash /money as the topmost item politicians reportedly offered in exchange for votes. Kramon and Posner (2013) also assert that cash and other types of handouts, which are often referred to as "chop money" are common to campaigns in Ghana. One of the party officials hinted that the range of items used in buying votes may depend on the occupation the people in an area are engaged in. The farming tools like cutlass and wellington boots are usually given out in farming communities, whereas silver pans (basins) and outboard motors are given out in the fishing communities. Distribution of respondents on whether their community benefitted from developmental projects prior to the 2016 general election in Ghana is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Communities benefitting from developmental projects prior to the 2016 general elections

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	111	39.7
No	169	60.3
Total	280	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents on their communities benefitting from developmental projects prior to the 2016 general elections in Shama District. It shows that 111 (39.7%) of the respondents picked 'Yes' that their communities benefitted from a developmental project prior to the 2016 general elections, whilst 169 (60.3%) ticked 'No' to the statement. This means that more of the respondents' had their communities benefitting from developmental projects prior to the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. In the interview sessions, participants named some of the developmental projects as building of community clinics which are usually called CHIPS compounds, construction and tarring of roads, construction of boreholes, building of school structures and toilet facilities.

Conditions Politicians Attach to Vote Buying Incentives

This section tried to find out whether it is true that conditions are attached to incentives during vote buying. It also solicits respondents' views on the kind of conditions that were attached to their incentives.

Distribution of respondents on whether conditions were attached to their incentives shows that out of the total of 94 respondents who received incentives or gifts from political parties; only 13 (13.8%) responded 'Yes', while the remaining 81 (86.2%) participants responded 'No.' This means few of the respondents who had been given incentives had conditions attached to their incentives.

Almost all the respondents interviewed, indicated that no condition was attached to their incentives. Only two respondents confirmed that a condition was attached to their incentives. Adwoa (real name withheld) a fishmonger, when asked whether she was given any condition when the incentive was given to her indicated that she was only given a silver pan (basin) and a party branded 'T' shirt. She added that "The branded 'T' shirt was an indication of whom I should vote for... That's all." Mr. Yoofi (real name withheld) also had this to say when asked the same question "but they know I am a party member that is why they gave me the party branded 'T' shirt with an amount of cash and no condition was attached."

This confirms what one of the party organizers indicated that they do not actually attach conditions to the incentives unless they have doubts about the party affiliation of the person or have the belief that a person just wants to collect the item and not vote for them. This defies the general notion held or the speculation that conditions are attached to the incentives. Table 4 elaborates on whether conditions were attached to vote buying incentives.

Table 4: Conditions attached to vote buying incentives

S/N	Item	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Total
1	I was told to snap a picture of my ballot	35 (37.2)	54 (57.5)	5 (5.3)	0 (0)	94 (100)
2	I was given an incentive and made to swear to go by the contract	39 (41.5)	52 (55.3)	2 (2.1)	1 (1.1)	94 (100)
3	I was given a ballot already thumb printed to use.	51 (54.3)	43 (45.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	94 (100)
4	The condition was to spoil my ballot.	53 (56.4)	39 (41.5)	1 (1.1)	1 (1.1)	94 (100)
5	I was told that if I collect the incentive and do not do per the contract I will die	46 (48.9)	47 (50.0)	0 (0)	1 (1.1)	94 (100)
6	I rejected the incentive because of the condition attached to it	37 (39.7)	39 (41.5)	9 (9.6)	9 (9.6)	94 (100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2017. SA. - Strongly Agree, A. - Agree, D. - Disagree, SD. - Strongly Disagree. Figures in bracket are percentages.

From item 1 of Table 4 which is - *I was told to snap a picture of my ballot* indicates that out of the total of 94 (33.6%) respondents who had benefitted from vote buying incentives, 35 (37.2%) strongly disagreed, 54 (57.5%) disagreed, while 5 (5.3%) agreed to the statement. Interview responses also indicated that only one of the 20 respondents interviewed indicated that she was asked to take a picture of her ballot. This means that this does not normally happen as only a few of the respondents who had received incentives from parties were told to take a shot of their ballots. From the above it can be deduced that although it happens, it does not often happen that people are asked to snap a picture of their ballots during vote buying.

Item 2 of Table 4 which is - *I was given an incentive and made to swear to go by the contract* indicates that out of the 94 respondents who had benefitted from electoral incentives, 39 (41.5%) strongly disagreed that they were made to swear when they were given the incentive. Fifty-two (52) making 55.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Two (2) making 2.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement and only one (1.1%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that many of the respondents who had benefitted from incentives were never made to swear before being given the incentive. This finding also defies the general notion and speculation or perception being held that during the distribution of vote buying incentives, beneficiaries are made to swear in the name of deities before given the incentive.

Item 3 of Table 4 which is - *I was given a ballot already thumb printed to use* shows that 51 (54.3%) strongly disagreed, 43 (45.7%) disagreed with the statement. None of the respondents agreed nor disagreed to the statement. This means it is very rare that voters are given already thumb printed ballot to use.

Item 4 of Table 4 asked respondents to respond to the statement - *The condition was to spoil my ballot*. The responses are as follows: 53 (56.4%) strongly disagreed, 39 (41.5%) disagreed, while 1 (1.1%) agreed and another 1 (1.1%) strongly agreed with the statement. The outcome indicates that this condition as speculated is not typically attached to voting incentives.

Item 5 of Table 4 which is - *I was told that if I collect the incentive and do not do per the contract I will die* shows that 46 (48.9%) strongly disagreed, 47 (50.0%) disagreed, while only one (1.1%) respondent strongly agreed. This means that this condition as speculated is not normally attached to an incentive.

Item 6 of Table 4 asked participants to respond to the statement - *Even if a condition was attached I would not reject the incentive*. The responses are as follows: 37 (39.7%) strongly disagreed, 39 (41.5%) disagreed, 9 (9.6%) agreed, while another 9 (9.6%) agreed with the statement. This means that a condition would not scare or deter voters from collecting the incentive. When interviewed, Kwamena (real name withheld) pointed out that “even if a condition is attached I will take it because it’s our own money.” The outcome implies that electorates are prepared to accept incentives when offered by politicians. Electorates have the intention of accepting incentives even if conditions are attached by politicians.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vote buying has gradually gained roots in the Ghanaian electoral system. The poor have often been the target of political parties during vote buying. This has made vote buying more effective with the poor. Often, the effectiveness of vote buying with poor voters is interpreted as a reflection of the fact that small material goods have a greater marginal utility to poor voters.

In short, vote buying builds a politician's credibility as a patron for the poor and can therefore be effective despite ballot secrecy because of the information that vote buying conveys to poor voters, who make up a large proportion of the electorates in Ghana.

Major items used in buying votes range from money, silver pans (basins), cloths, cutlasses, gas cylinders, laptops, money, outboard motors, wellington boots to party branded paraphernalia. Party branded items tops the range of items used as incentives during vote buying followed by money. In most cases conditions are not attached to the incentives except where the person giving the incentive suspects that the receiver is not going to vote for him/her or the party. Voters are not willing to reject the items (incentives) even if conditions are attached to them.

One of the major implications of vote buying is that it can trigger corruption by politicians after they are voted into power. This is because they would want to get return on money invested during election campaigns. This can lead to the abuse of state resources.

The use of incentives to buy votes may have repercussions on Ghana's elections. It can negatively impact the quality (freeness and fairness) of elections. Vote buying can contribute to the wrong political parties being elected to serve the nation. Once voters are paid to cast their votes in a certain way they become enslaved by their political paymasters as, by default, their rights to challenge their vote buying political paymasters are restricted. As vote buying is so widespread, it raises concerns about the quality of emerging democratic institutions and how potential elections conducted will help to deliver better and more accountable governments.

Reducing poverty can also be seen as strategy to reduce vote buying. Since the findings concluded that there is a relationship between income (economic status) and voters' decisions, governments should make it a point to reduce poverty by enhancing wealth redistribution. This can be done by creating or providing sustainable jobs, especially for the rural folks.

There is the need for more voter education and sensitization campaigns or awareness of citizens about the malpractice of buying votes. Voters, governments, NGOs, electoral bodies, civil societies, and non-state actors should find it an activity to spearhead and strengthen democracy by mounting vigorous campaigns to educate the electorates not to accept financial or material rewards before they vote for a particular candidate or party as this amounts to selling one's conscience. By the use of incentives to buy votes the power of the ordinary Ghanaian is gradually being sold to the rich politicians who may decide who wins an election in the country. Since senior high school students also take part in national elections and are targets in distributing the incentives, the curriculum at this level of education should include vote buying to sensitize and conscientize them about the menace.

Finally, creating awareness on the ills of the practice of vote buying and retelling of societal morals by all electoral stakeholders will be prudent in curbing it. All stakeholders of elections in Ghana including the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), the Electoral Commission (EC) together with media houses must educate the public on the negative effects of vote buying on the country's democracy. Besides, religious bodies can re-instill morals into their congregations who form the voting population.

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