CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN ABEOKUTA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE

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Abstract
Agriculture has proved to be one of the major sectors that has contributed to the growth and employment of labour of many countries in the world. In Nigeria Agriculture played an important role in pre-independence and shortly post-independence in terms of employment generation and contribution to Gross Domestic Product but the situation changed after the discovery of crude oil in 1970 which made a lot of people to leave agriculture and seek for employment in oil and gas sectors. The aftermath of this mobility from agriculture to oil and gas exacerbated the unemployment situation and balance of payment such that it became unfavorable as a result of the fact that Nigeria became an importer of the agricultural products which she has comparative cost advantages on. However several policies and schemes have been introduced by the successive government to salvage the situation but it proved abortive. The study aimed at examining the contribution of agriculture to employment generation in Abeokuta South and Odeda Local Government Areas between 2010-2015. Data were collected from the primary sources
with the aid of questionnaires and interview. The secondary data were gathered from the records of the local governments regarding the amount spent on agriculture. Analysis of the data was conducted using parametric tool while the hypotheses were tested with the aid of Pearson correlation. The outcome of the test revealed that there is a significant relationship among the Government effort, agricultural development, the types of Agricultural practice adopted and employment. The result showed that there is 0.161 relationship among the variables which depicts that agriculture only had 16% influence on employment showing a very weak relationship. It is therefore recommended that government should show sincerity in their agricultural programmes. The Ministry of Agriculture and other agricultural departments should be made to measure up to expectation. The Government must encourage commercial agricultural practices and sponsor it maximally with the assistance of the World Bank. That can generate multiples of employment opportunities in the state as well as in the local government areas.

Introduction
Agriculture has been the live wire of many countries cannot be over- emphasized. According to Ogbalubi and Wokocha (2013) agriculture is the mainstay of many economies. The success recorded in technology of many advanced economies can be attributed to agriculture. Ojenegbo, (2011) observes that the industrial revolution of the Ninetieth century which catapulted the agrarian economies of the most countries of Europe got the impetus in agriculture. Agriculture is a critical sector that catapulted many economies into growth and development. As such, there are many countries of the world that have reached economic development through agriculture. The study of economic history provides us with ample evidence that an agricultural revolution is a fundamental/ pre-condition for economic development (Eicher and Witt, 1964: OluwaSanni, 1966: Jones and Woolf, 1969). The potential of any countries lie in the development of its agriculture because of the Nexus between agriculture and industrialization. According to Ogen (2007) the Brazilian experience is of course, a sticking example of how agriculture can advance beyond its primary function of supplying food and fibre. However, agriculture is considered a mechanism through which the overall development of any nation is guaranteed. Oni (2014) observes that agricultural development is critically important for ensuring food nutritional security, income and employment generation and for stimulating industrialization and overall economic development of the country. However, in an agrarian country like Nigeria, the land as a unit for agricultural production provides the needed fulcrum upon which a sustainable development would blossom. The practice of agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy. It provides the means of livelihood for over 70% of the population and a major source of raw materials for agro-allied industries and potent sources of the much needed foreign exchange (World Bank, 2008 & Okuma Dewa 1997).
In pre-independent and shortly after independence in 1960s, agriculture was seen playing an important role in Nigeria. Agriculture contributed immensely to the Gross Domestic
product, provided food security and employed more than 70% of the Nigerian populace. (NOS)
The agricultural sector contributed over 60% of the GDP in the 1960s and despite the reliance of Nigerian peasant farmers on traditional tools and indigenous farming methods, these farmers produced 70% of Nigeria exports and 95% of its food needs. It has been reported that in Nigeria today over 65% of the population derived its income from livestock rearing, crop farming, forestry or fishing. It provides the means of livelihood for over 70% of the population and a major source of raw materials for agro-allied industries and potent sources of the needed foreign exchange (Lawal, 1997; Okumadewa, 1977). However it is disheartening to note here that shortly after the independence in the 1970s, the oil boom era, attention shifted from agriculture and able body men left agriculture in pursuance of black gold but fortunately oil sector cannot employ as much as agricultural will employ. This caused a lot of unemployment amongst the youths in Nigeria in which Abeokuta South Local Government areas not exempted. This unemployment led to many social vices such as rape, robbery, terrorism, prostitution etc.
Abeokuta south Local Government that was known for agriculture and home of agricultural products such as maize, cassava etc. cannot produce these products maximally to contribute to GDP. Hence the federal, state and local government having realized the danger in unemployment began series of policies and intervention programmes such as Operation Feed the nation in 1970s, Green Revolution (1980s), Agricultural development programme, Ogun State Employment Generation Programme (OGEGEP-AGRIC) with emphasise on extension services, training and re-training of the farmers, use of modern tools, increase in food production etc. But in spite of all these policies and interventions, agricultural has not been able to provide needed employment in Abeokuta south Local Government area of Ogun State. It is against this back drop that this paper seeks to examine the nexus between agriculture and employment generation in Abeokuta South local government area between 2010 -2016.

Literature Review
Nigeria and the Agricultural Sector
Ogbalubi and Wokocha (2013) opine that although, Nigeria depends heartily on oil industry for its revenue, it is still predominantly an agricultural society. Agriculture remains a key sector of the economy providing employment for about 70 percent of the population. The bulk of this population is engaged in agricultural production of a subsistence level: the holdings are generally small and scattered. The Federal statistics in its 1999 reports indicated that agriculture sector provided 41% of Nigeria’s total gross domestic product (GDP) in that year. This represented a decrease of 24.7% firm its contribution of 66.7% to the GDP in 1957.
The Nigerian climatic condition allows variety of foods and cash crops to be grown. These include rice, corn, kola nut, groundnut etc. which are exported to America and Europe. According to Ogen (2003) interestingly the Nigerian economy unlike that of Brazil, during the first decade after independence could reasonably be described as an agricultural economy because agriculture served as the engine of growth of the overall economy. From the stand point of occupational distribution and contribution to the GDP, agriculture was the leading sector. During this period Nigeria was the World’s second largest producer of
cocoa, largest exporter of Palm Kernel and Largest producer and exporter of palm oil. Nigeria was also a leading exporter of other major commodities such as cotton, groundnuts rubber and hides and skins (Alkali, 1997).

Many agriculture policies were initiated in Nigeria to boost food production, contribute to GDP and employment generation. In 1970 federal government showed interest in the production of cash and food crops. Myriads of agricultural projects are put in place which includes livestock’s, grains etc. according to Lawal (1997) sugar factories were also established at Numan, Lafiagi an Sunti. The Nigerian agricultural and cooperative Bank (NACB) was established in 1973 as part of government’s effort to inject oil wealth into the agricultural sector through the provision of credit facilities to support agriculture and agro- allied businesses |(Olagunju, 2000).

It is indeed unfortunate to note that after the discovery of oil in 1970s, Nigeria became the importer of products in which she has comparative cost advantage over. According to Alkali (1997) in 1982 alone, Nigeria imported 153,000 MT tons of palm oil at the cost of UD 92 million and 55,000mt tons of cotton valued total of 7.07 million tons of wheat, 1.62 million tons of rice and 431,000 tons of maize were imported. Thus, from N47.8million in the 60s, the cost of food imports in Nigeria rose to N88.2 million in 1970 and N1,027.0 million in 1988 |(Alkali, 1997) Lawal (1997) observes that since the 1990s and Until the recent ban on rice importation, Nigeria has been spending an average of 60million USD on the importation of rice annually. Indeed, in 1994, the agricultural sector performed below the projected 7.2 percent of budgetary output.

Unemployment in Nigeria.

According to Gbosi (1997) unemployment as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. World Bank (1990) points out that in recent time, the definition of unemployment by the international labour organization states that the unemployed is a member of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work application of this definition across countries has been united, especially for the purpose of companion and policy formulation, as countries characteristics are not the same in their commitment to resolving unemployment problems, more so, the preponderance of housewives who possess the ability and willingness to work, the definition of the age bracket all stand as limitations to the definition by ILO (Douglaston et al, 2006). Central Bank of Nigeria (2003) observes that the national unemployment rate rose from 4.3 percent in 1970 to 6.4 percent in 1980. The high rate of unemployment was largely due to depression in the economy in the 70s, however in order to savage the situation economic measures were put in place which included restriction on exports, embargo on employment etc. supporting this view is Odusola (2001) specifically, total disengagement from the Federal civil service rose from 2,724 in 1980 to 6,294 in 1984. Also the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) BY Babangida’s Administration in 1986 increased the rate of unemployment in Nigeria from 1.8% in 1995 to 4.7 in 2000. According to Douglaston et al (2006) owing to this, the national unemployed menstruate fluctuated around 6.0% until 1987 when it rose to 7.1 percent. It is important to state here, that SAP adopted in 1986 had serious implications on employment in Nigeria, as unemployment rate declined from 7.1% in 1987,
to as low as 1.8% in 1995, after which it rose to 3.4 percent in 1996 and hovered between 3.4 and 4.7 percent between 1996 and 2000.

The analysts by educational status also suggest that people who have been majorly affected by unemployment are those without basic education, for instance persons with and without Primary School Education accounted for 76.8 / 80.6 percent of the unemployment in 1974 and 1978 respectively. In recent times however, the situation has been impounded by the increasing unemployment of professionals such as accountants, engineers, among others (Asoluka and Okezie, 2011). According to 1974 survey reported by Aigbokhan (2000), reported by Akintoye (2003), quoted in Asoluka and Okezie(2011) graduate unemployment accounted for less than 1 percent of the unemployed in 1974 by 1984, the proportion rose to 4 percent for urban areas and 2.2 percent in the rural areas. According to NBS (2010) quoted in Asoluka and Okezie (2011) it is impressive to note that, in 2005, Nigerian’s unemployment rate declined to 11.9 percent from 14.8 in 2003. This decline was attributed to the various government efforts aimed at addressing the problem through poverty alleviation programmes. This decline also pointed to an increased number of people who get engaged in the informal sector activities. Unemployment increased sharply from 14.9% in March 2008 to 19.7% in March 2009. When disaggregated by sector gave 19.2% for Urban and 19.8% for rural.

Factors that led to High Rate of Unemployment in Nigeria

i. Poor economic growth rate: The high level of corruption, mismanagement of public funds, harsh economic policies, emergence of insecurity Niger delta fighter etc. have affected the economic growth.

ii. The rate at which monies were misappropriated in the last administration affected the economy and led Nigeria into recession thereby worsening unemployment.

iii. Wrongly and untimely adoption of economic policy measures- the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in September 1986 exacerbated the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Though reasons for the implementation of this programme were to fast-track the growth of the economy but some of the programme variables were anti-growth measures which further exacerbated the rate of unemployed persons in Nigeria.

iv. Neglect of the Agricultural Sector: This sector was left after the discovery of oil. The exploration of oil brought about a shift in paradigm as abled men left the farm in quest for greener pastures in oil sector. Agriculture could not contribute anything meaningful to GDP and unemployment again and oil sector could not employ as much as agriculture, so that remaining people that were not employed increased the rate of unemployment in Nigeria.

v. Wrong impression about technical, vocational, and weak curricular studies: The wrong impression by the graduates is as a result of the lack of practical skills that could increase self-employment coupled with weak institutional curricular to equip graduates to be self-employed.

Methodology
This paper adopts survey research design as an investigative technique. Questionnaire was used to generate some of the relevant primary information. For the secondary data,
journals, newspapers, magazines, reports, published materials, internet and live television broadcast were the major sources. The population of the study includes the people of Abeokuta South local government area. The population of Abeokuta South local government area as at 2006 census is 250,278 people. The target populations for the study are farmers both young and old. The sample size was drawn from the farmers in Abeokuta South Local Government Area. 385 questionnaires were distributed and 370 were returned and accepted for analysis.

**Discussions and Findings**

Pearson tool of analysis is used to measure the level of relationship between Agriculture and employment, at five percent (1%) level of significance.

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The assumption under the test procedure is that when P-value is less than or equal to the level of Alpha (0.01): the null proposition is invalidated else the study fails to reject the null proposition when P-value is greater than or equal to the level of Alpha (0.01).

The study developed a hypothesis that agricultural development does not have significant relationship with employment in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. From the Pearson correlation table above it means that we reject the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between Agriculture and Employment because the relationship is at 0.161 percent, which means that Agricultural development influenced employment at 16 percent only which is too weak while other sectors such as Banking, Education, Manufacturing etc influenced the employment by 84 percent.

However, another reason for the weak relationship among all these variables can be attributed to the fact that most farmers did not benefit from the support service rendered by Abeokuta South Local Government Council. Also Abeokuta South Local Government Authorities that claimed to be giving support services to the farmers are not better off because of the fact that most of their Agricultural equipment’s have become grounded. The Researcher alongside with NULGE Chairman in the person of Mr. Bajela visited Abeokuta South Local Government Council Farm located at Asero in Abeokuta where it was discovered that the farm has become home for reptiles and weeds. The Researcher also visited the Chairman of Abeokuta South Farmers Association in the person of Pa Shodipo to confirm if truly Abeokuta South Local Government Authority has recorded success in the area of Agriculture and his answer was that nothing much has been done but that the present Head of Agricultural department promised the farmers’ better days ahead.
However, the relationship between Agriculture and employment generation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area is weak which can be attributed to inter alia

i. Agricultural practices have provided little employment and means of livelihood to the unemployed populace within the study area.

ii. The research discovered that Abeokuta local government has not done much in the provision of extension services, and nothing in the provision of modern Agricultural tools etc.

iii. Also farmers have no access to micro-credit facilities that can boost the development of Agriculture in Abeokuta South Local Government Area.

iv. Despite the support services provided by the local government, it has not met the demand of most farmers. In other words, the support services have not yielded positive transformation.

v. Paucity of fund has made these support services ineffective as a result of lack of autonomy of the local government. The joint account maintained by the state has rendered the local government ineffective and inefficient in discharging their duties to the farmers’ maximally.

Conclusion
From the above findings it can be seen that agriculture has not been given adequate priority, as Agriculture only influenced 16%. It is believed that if Agriculture is given utmost priority, it will improve the quality of life of the rural and urban dwellers through creation of job. Also, it will increase the entrepreneurial skills of young graduates by discouraging them of taking up government and private works in Abeokuta South Local Government Area and Nigeria at large

Recommendation
The study recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture and agricultural departments in the Local Government should be made to measure up to expectation. The Government should encourage commercial agricultural development and sponsor it maximally with the assistance from the World Bank.

Other recommendations include:

i. The Local governments in the state should be given autonomy in order to perform effectively in the area of agriculture. That will make enough funds available for the local government to execute its budget on agriculture without interference from the state government.

ii. Abeokuta south Local Government Area should make logistic ready in terms of mobility and operational vehicles for visiting farms and villages.

iii. Abeokuta south Local Government Authority should employ more extension officers so as to meet the demand of farmers since extension services are important aspect of agriculture development.

iv. It is incumbent on the Abeokuta south Local Government Authority to design a special package for farmers that will form part of social security in order to alleviate poverty and redistribute income.

v. Rural road should be constructed and maintained so that farm produce can be transported to the urban centres for sales.
vi. Abeokuta south Local Government Authority should help farmers to have access to loan from the bank of Agriculture and also they
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