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Empirical Analysis of Curriculum and Employment in the Labor Market: A Study of the Agriculture Economics and Development Department

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Abstract

This field study empirically explores the linkage between curriculum quality and graduate employment results in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development at Shaikh Zayed University, Afghanistan. Adopting a mixed-methods process, quantitative analysis of graduate survey responses with qualitative evidence from literature and field observations to assess curriculum relevance, teaching effectiveness, and alignment with labour market needs. Data were gathered from 80 graduates over the past four years using structured questionnaires and the probability sampling method to trace employment status. Descriptive statistics in SPSS were applied to evaluate graduates' views on curriculum satisfaction, society, practical exposure, and teaching management, as well as the trend of new students and graduation. Results show broad agreement that the curriculum is current and meets expectations, particularly regarding market relevance. However, greater variation in responses related to practical, curriculum structure, and management practices points to areas requiring improvement. Additionally, employment, graduation, and enrolment trends from 2021 to 2025 were analysed. Many alumni are working in government organisations and non-government organisations by their abilities and talents, research discovered, and most of the graduated students are hired in agriculture and the higher ministry education sector. although the number of graduates has decreased in 2025 due to economic difficulties, families' financial challenges, migration, and lower intake. Furthermore, some have pursued further education. Generally, the consequences show that the curriculum stimulates employability, although it might have more practical components, better institutional connections, and a more market-focused method. The study provides evidence-based recommendations for curriculum improvement that emphasizes the development of practical skills, improved teaching management, and greater collaboration with the labour market.

Keywords: Agricultural Economics and Development, Curriculum, Employment, Market

Introduction

This study assesses graduates of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development by examining departmental performance, employment outcomes across different sectors, and trends in graduate numbers over recent years. Particular attention is given to changes in graduate enrollment, increases and decreases in student numbers, and their implications for labor market participation. Over eight graduation cycles, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development has produced nearly 350 graduates, many of whom are employed in government institutions, non-governmental organizations, private companies, and development-related sectors. These graduates have played an important role in supporting agricultural development and contributing to socio-economic progress. Analysis of the most recent four graduation cycles shows that, despite fluctuations in student numbers, the department continues to supply skilled human resources to the labor market. Specifically, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development plays a vital role in areas such as economic analysis of agriculture, policies for increasing agricultural income, rural development, and related fields. Therefore, its curriculum must align with both academic and practical standards as well as the real demands of the labor market. Additionally, graduates' evaluations provide a reliable basis for assessing curriculum and teaching quality, as they have experienced the educational process firsthand and have faced practical challenges in the job market. Graduate perspectives offer essential evidence for improving higher education quality (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Furthermore, assessing graduates' opinions highlights gaps between theoretical learning and labor market demands (Ahmad & Khan, 2018) and demonstrates that a market-oriented curriculum with practical components enhances graduates' employability (Samt, 2020; Eidoo, 2022). In Afghanistan, higher education curricula still face numerous challenges, as educational programs are not fully adaptable to the rapidly changing economic and technological needs of the labor market. This limitation reduces graduates' employment opportunities (Ishaqzai et al., 2025). Public making policy rules implementation in regional education and increase effectiveness of market (Yousaf et al., n.d.). Therefore, evaluating the curriculum and teaching quality of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development from the graduates' perspective can provide important recommendations for curriculum reform and the improvement of the educational process. Studies have also shown that the proportion of women with intermediate and advanced education does not significantly affect economic growth among the low-working-age population, as the p-value exceeds 0.05 (Mohammadi & Ahmadzai, 2023).

This study was designed to evaluate the professional competencies of graduates, based on the views of those currently employed, and to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum they completed. It seeks to analyze how Agricultural Economics education contributes to performance, service delivery, and employment in the agricultural and related sectors. Furthermore, the study defines its objectives through comprehensive empirical data analysis

Objectives:

- To empirically evaluate the development and teaching-curriculum in the Agricultural Economics and development at Shaikh Zayed University.
- To analyze the trends and patterns of graduates' employment in the labor market.

- To assess the performance and professional development of graduates in their fields on the based on their capabilities.

Review of Literature

Ali Shah et al. (2009), in their research article, found that the structure of agricultural development curricula generally plays an effective role in improving students' skills, critical thinking, and professional knowledge. However, limitations such as insufficient practical experience, repetition of course content, and weak links between students and extension organizations were identified as significant shortcomings. Including new extension concepts and innovative teaching methods was recommended to increase curriculum effectiveness.

Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasized that evaluating curriculum and teaching quality from graduates' perspectives is a critical issue in higher education, particularly in the field of Agricultural Economics and Development. Graduates from this discipline, based on their practical experiences, often lack certain professional skills. They can, however, provide valuable and informed feedback regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the alignment of learning objectives with labor market needs.

Ahmad and Khan (2018) highlighted that graduates' evaluations reveal gaps between classroom learning and industry requirements in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development. Their study indicated that graduates require more practical work, field projects, and work-based experience, which are essential considerations for curriculum reform and improvement strategies.

Ahmad and Khan (2018) reported that graduates often experience a disconnect between what is taught in the classroom and what is required in professional settings. Their study highlighted the need for greater emphasis on practical exposure, fieldwork, and work-based learning as key components of curriculum reform. Without adequate practical learning, theoretical knowledge remains underutilized in real work environments.

Samt et al. (2020), in a field study, demonstrated that graduates' opinions play a significant role in enhancing the quality of instruction in agricultural development programs in developing countries. Specifically, the effectiveness of lectures, seminars, and field activities is assessed through the experiences and skills of graduates.

Edowu (2021), in a field study in Nigeria, evaluated the curriculum of agricultural economics departments based on graduates' feedback, aiming to determine whether it meets labor market requirements, professional skill demands, and practical training needs. The study concluded that, although the curriculum provides a solid theoretical foundation, gaps remain in practical skills, innovation, employability, and market-oriented training. Edowu emphasized that curriculum review and reform should be aligned with labor market demands, private sector needs, and the goals of sustainable agricultural development. The study further recommended increasing the active involvement of graduates, employers, and professional institutions in curriculum design to enhance the effectiveness of agricultural economics services.

Ahmadzai (2022) research indicated that's, in 2001-2020 years' total average of Agricultural employment in Afghanistan is 54.06 per cent.

Ishaqzai et al. (2025), in their study on curriculum alignment with the labor market, reported that higher education curricula in Afghanistan are not fully aligned with the evolving economic and technological demands of the labor market. The findings indicated that fundamental curriculum components—such as learning objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment—maintain meaningful relationships with key labor market indicators (practical experience, specialized skills, and employment opportunities). Nonetheless, weak practical training, lack of skills, and poor institutional links between universities and professional environments were identified as major factors contributing to low graduate employability.

Methodology

Through graduate students and staff, this field study assessed the Agricultural Economics and Development curriculum's employability and content. The study looked at how the department's teaching strategies, curriculum, and employment relevance performed in various parts and found areas where graduates' opinions diverged. Through field-based research, including direct and indirect observations, surveys, questionnaire data collecting, descriptive statistical analysis, and assessment of prior studies and pertinent literature, the study also examined current issues and suggested potential solutions. Department members, pertinent organizations, and community stakeholders in various sectors are the target audience for the findings.

Method:

This study conducting a mixed-methods approach, integrating both

quantitative and qualitative strategies. In the qualitative approach, analysis of previous literature, evaluation of opinions, and assessment of questionnaire items based on the ordinal measurement. In the quantitative approach, responses from graduates' questionnaires were analyzed of central tendency and dispersion measurement behave of the SPSS software.

Data Collection:

The study collected primary (raw) data. Questionnaires were designed considering various criteria through the total population of graduates in last four years. The data gathering is considering direct and indirect way from the graduates' student and collected data included responses from graduates according to the distribution of the sample.

Sampling

this study defines the probability sampling and sampling taken from the total unlimited population of graduates students over the different years . Sampling derived Cochran and Krejci formulas and selected 80 sample from the all graduate's students.

Result and Data analysis:

Data analysis was conducted based on various criteria using descriptive statistical tools such as Measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion (standard deviation, variance) were computed. The measurement performed using SPSS software, which allowed for systematic evaluation of graduates' opinions across different years and assessment of the curriculum and employment in specific field based on their capabilities in different sectors.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Curriculum criteria of graduate's students:

Descriptive statistic of Curriculum by the graduates responsiveness last four years											
parameters	Is the curriculum of the Department of Agricultural Economics up-to-date?		Does the curriculum meet your expectations?	In your opinion, does this curriculum align with market demand?	Does the curriculum correspond to the faculty's conditions, teaching facilities, and resources?	Does the stated curriculum help you in finding employment?	Are there any subjects in the curriculum that should be removed?	The curriculum content is well-organized.	Practical work was conducted during teaching.	The behavior of the head (or principal) towards the students is good.	How is the attitude of executive principal with students
	N	Valid	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
	Missing	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean	1.10		1.04	1.13	1.31	1.23	1.34	1.20	1.33	1.23	1.36
Mode	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Std.Deviation	.409		.191	.369	.565	.527	.526	.537	.591	.595	.680
Variance	.167		.037	.136	.319	.278	.277	.289	.349	.354	.462
Sum	88		83	90	105	98	107	96	106	98	109

The table indicates that responses were collected from 80 graduates of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development across different years. The survey consisted of ten questions, distributed across various sectors. All 80 responses were deemed valid, with a maximum sampling error of three. Analysis of the data shows that the highest mean score, 1.36, was recorded for the question "How is the attitude of executive principal with students?" suggesting relatively high graduate satisfaction in this area. The mode for all questions was consistently 1, indicating a

uniform pattern in responses across the sample. Conversely, the question "Does the curriculum meet your expectations?" had the lowest standard deviation of 0.191, meaning responses deviated only 19.1% from the mean. This reflects strong consensus among graduates that the curriculum meets their expectations and aligns with both market needs and societal requirements. On the other hand, the highest standard deviation, 0.680, was observed for the teaching management question, indicating considerable variability (68%) in graduates' perceptions. Similarly, a standard deviation of

0.591 for “practical activities conducted during teaching” shows that practical work is not sufficiently emphasized. Another notable standard deviation of 0.537 for “organization of curriculum content” indicates that gaps still exist in curriculum structure and sequencing. In summary, while graduates generally view the

curriculum as relevant and effective, significant differences exist in perceptions of teaching management, practical training, and curriculum organization, highlighting areas that require focused improvement.

Table 2: Enrollment, Deferment, and Dropped-out of Students in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development in four years

NO	Years	Number of New students	Dropped-out	Dropped-out students percentage	Deferred students	Deferred students percentage
1	2022	37	5	13.51	2	5.40
2	2023	50	0	00	3	4.5
3	2024	54	1	1.85	1	1.85
4	2025	37	No defined yet	No defined yet	No defined yet	No defined yet

Over the four years from 2021 to 2023, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development admitted between 37 and 54 new students each year, with deferment and dropout rates generally low and decreasing, indicating strong student retention. Despite a relatively modest number of new students, the department remains popular due to its close connection with Afghanistan’s economy, rural development, trade, and social progress. Students are drawn by the opportunity to contribute to agricultural resource management, gain skills in economics, statistics, and research, and prepare for careers in government agencies, NGOs, international organizations, and development programs. Economic and family responsibilities are the main reasons some students defer, but overall, the department offers high employment prospects and plays a vital role in meeting the country’s agricultural and rural development needs.

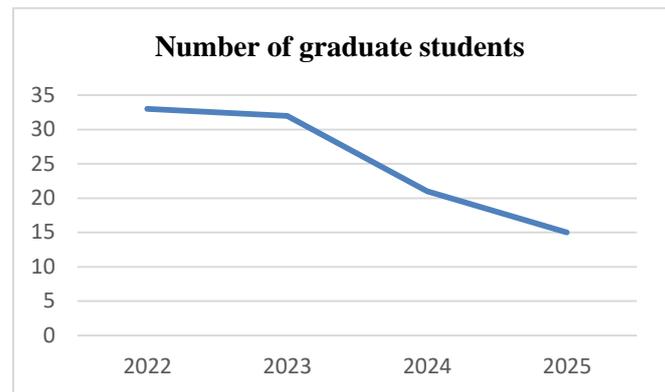
Table 3: Graduated students of Agriculture economics in last four years.

No.	Years	Number of graduated student
1	2022	33
2	2023	32
3	2024	21
4	2025	15
Total		101

Table shows, The Department of Agricultural Economics and Development generated more graduates in 2022 and 2023 than in prior years, and many of them are employed by both governmental

and non-governmental organizations’. Given that it offers more job opportunities than other departments and sectors, this demonstrates the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development’s substantial significance to society. However, the country’s rising unemployment rate, migration, a lack of incentives, and a lack of work prospects are the main causes of the overall drop in graduates. This is further exacerbated by the fact that only a tiny percentage of 12th grade graduates are able to get into the relevant department.

Figure 1:



This figure shows total number of graduates from the Department of Agricultural Economics over the last four years. The highest graduation student percentage, 33%, was recorded in 2022, while the lowest was observed in 2025. The decline rate is due to the several factor impact such as lower student enrollment due to the because of financial constraints and family responsibilities and challenges.

Table 4: Trends and series in Graduate students in Last Four Years:

NO	Years	Number of graduated student	Percentage increase compared to the previous year	The decrease compared to the previous year
1	2021	33	0	5
2	2022	33	0	0.00
3	2023	32	0	3.03
4	2024	21	0	34.37
5	2025	15		28.57

This tables shows, It is clear from the above table that the Department of Agricultural Economics produced the same number of graduates in 2021 and 2022. This equality is a result of societal demands, the search for work, and the objective of developing agricultural economics in order to confront and resolve current social issues. However, many parents lost their employment or were unemployed in recent years as a result of numerous changes. As a result, their offspring either relocated abroad or found other forms of employment within the nation to help support their families. Furthermore, only a small percentage of 12th grade graduates sit for the university admission exam, and while they perceive employment prospects in this field, fewer graduates are eventually accepted into international schools. Opportunities are also limited by poverty and financial limitations, which causes many students to travel to affluent nations. Additionally, by 2025, things like a poor job market, a lack of funding, and the migration or indifference of many students abroad have grown to be significant problems.

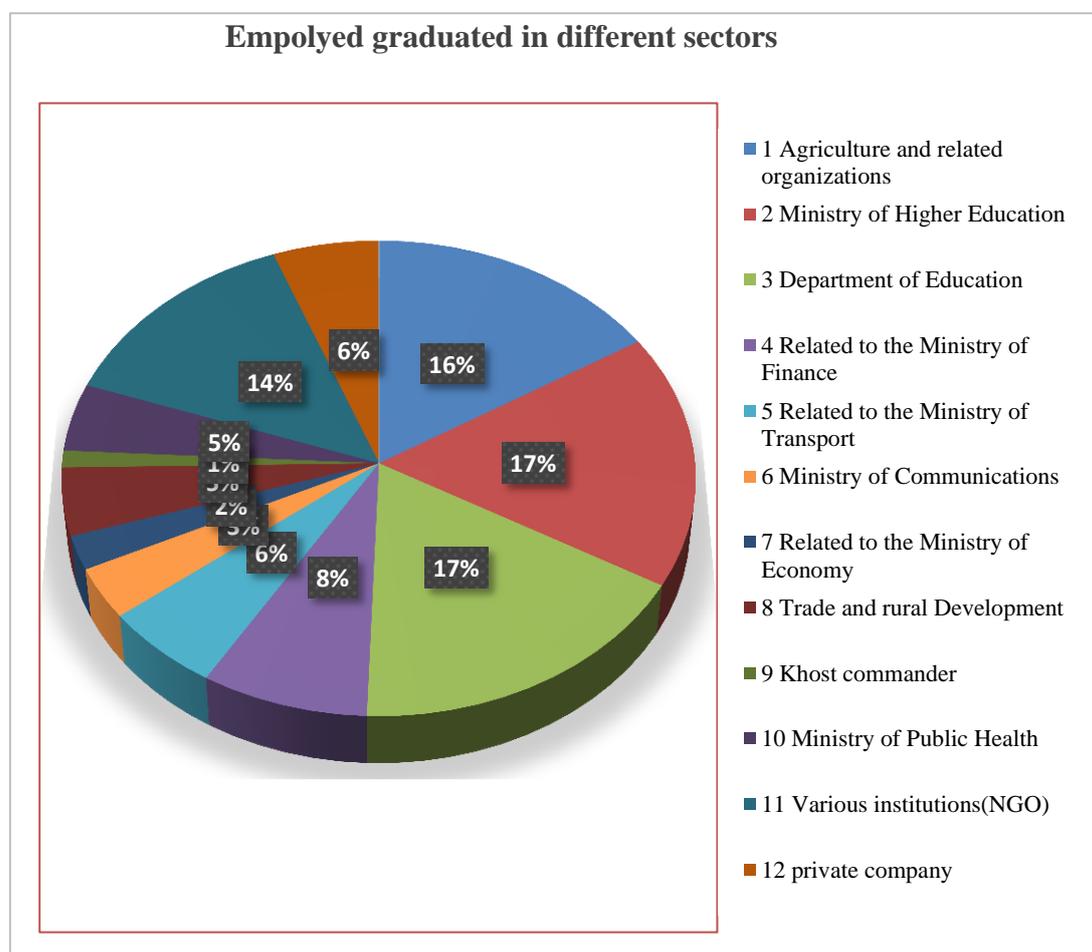
Table 5: Agricultural Economics and Development Graduates Student Employment in Different Sectors:

No.	Number of employed graduates	Different organization (Ministry)
1	Agriculture and related organizations	14
2	Ministry of Higher Education	15
3	Department of Education	15

4	Related to the Ministry of Finance	7
5	Related to the Ministry of Transport	5
6	Ministry of Communications	3
7	Related to the Ministry of Economy	2
8	Trade and rural Development	4
9	Khost commander	1
10	Ministry of Public Health	4
11	Various institutions(NGO)	12
12	private company	5

This table makes it clear that alumni of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development have become a vital source of contribution to society and have demonstrated a strong presence across several years. Snowball sampling was used in non-probability interviews to gather data for this survey. The data was collected, arranged, and examined using this methodology. The Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, and the Department of Agriculture, which operate in several provinces (with substantial activity in Khost), employ the greatest number of graduates, according to the table. It should be mentioned, nevertheless, that there are other graduates who are working, but their information from far-off areas was not able to be gathered and displayed here. In order to improve quality assurance, efforts are being made to collect graduates' annual employment data and accurately record it in the records.

Figure 2: Diagram of graduates from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development employed in various institutions



This chart shows that graduates of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development have been employed as lecturers in the Ministry of Agriculture and related departments and Higher Education, and are also engaged in teaching at universities.

Table 6: Employment of Graduates students, Annual Employment, Field-Related Jobs, and Academic Advancement in last five years:

years	Number of graduated students	Employed graduated student	Employed graduated student percentage	Recruitment according to the field	Continue higher education(MSc)
2021	33	24	72%	62%	5
2022	33	21	63%	57.1%	4
2023	32	25	78%	64%	3
2024	21	14	66.6%	57.14%	0
2025	15	2	33.3%	80%	0
total	134	86	65.179%	64.04%	0

This table shows, Students from the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Faculty of Agriculture have graduated in eight periods thus far. A total of 314 students have graduated from these eight cohorts. Fifteen students were given the opportunity to serve society in 2025 alone. Many of these students are currently working in government and non-government organisations, private businesses, and the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Agriculture, among other organisations. At the moment, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Development is collecting precise data, observations, and statistics about its alumni in addition to getting their input. To properly determine the job situation of graduates, this data will be analysed and disseminated to the appropriate ministries and society. However, a large number of this department's graduates work for national and international organisations in roles related to their field of study, such as in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, and numerous private businesses and organisations connected to the Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Communications, Transport, and Finance. They hold positions as officers, directors, managers, advisors, lecturers, supervisors, and leaders of departments. The table demonstrates how employment in their field of study indicates a wide range of career options, professional aptitude, and a keen interest in their area of expertise. Furthermore, several alumni are working with other schools on pertinent projects. Additionally, some graduates are employed by various organisations both domestically and abroad as a result of the lack of employment possibilities and unemployment. We have gathered more data about their pursuit of higher education. Many recent grads try to apply for international scholarships through open competition, but they haven't yet gotten their results. There are ongoing efforts to gather comprehensive information in this area, and the records contain supporting documentation.

Conclusion

This study looked at the relationship between graduates' competences and employment outcomes and its applicability of the curriculum in Shaikh Zayed University's Department of Agricultural Economics and Development. Based on 80 alumni' survey replies, descriptive statistical analysis, and corroborating qualitative data, the results give a clear picture of the program's advantages as well as its shortcomings. In general, graduates strongly agreed that the curriculum is current, meets expectations, and is in line with the demands of the labour market. There is

widespread agreement that the program's theoretical underpinnings are pertinent to Afghanistan's present agricultural and development issues, as seen by the low variance in replies to these questions. Numerous alumni have found jobs in government agencies, non-governmental organizations, commercial businesses, and academic institutions that are relevant to their profession. This indicates that the department still provides competent human resources to important economic areas and makes a significant contribution to public service and agricultural development. However, there are significant gaps shown by the wider range of answers regarding curriculum organization, teacher administration, and practical training. Feedback from graduates indicates that although the theoretical content is solid, fieldwork, practical exposure, and organized skill development are not given enough attention. The need for better departmental cooperation, organization, and instructional planning is further highlighted by disparities in opinions regarding management techniques and curricular sequencing. Recent trends in enrolment, deferment, dropout, and graduation indicate a decrease in the number of students, primarily as a result of outside influences including migration, economic hardship, lower intake, and less job incentives. Despite these obstacles, a large number of graduates continue to seek further study or work in positions related to their areas of expertise, and employment rates among graduates are still comparatively high. This illustrates how important and in-demand agricultural economics knowledge is in Afghanistan's labour market. The Department of Agricultural Economics and Development's curriculum is successful in promoting graduate employability and satisfying market demands, but it needs to be strengthened in terms of practical elements, institutional administration, and connections with labour market stakeholders. The quality of education and future graduates' career chances will be significantly improved by expanding field-based learning, refining the curriculum, and encouraging cooperation with companies and professional organisations. This research advances higher education and agricultural development in Afghanistan by offering evidence-based recommendations for curriculum reform and quality enhancement.

Recommendations

- ✓ Increase graduates' practical skills, abilities, and real-world experience by introducing required internships, regular field trips, case studies, and modelling.
- ✓ Add courses that are pertinent to the market, such as research methodologies, value production, value chain

analysis, project management, inferential statistics, and Evie's software, and remove outdated material.

- ✓ Educate and train educators in contemporary, interactive teaching techniques and enhance academic counselling, planning, and various seminars.
- ✓ Form official alliances with ministries, non-governmental organisations, and private businesses to assist student internships, guest lectures, and career pathways.
- ✓ Keep an alumni database and carry out frequent tracer studies to use graduates' input for ongoing curriculum and quality enhancement.
- ✓ To prepare students for a variety of career opportunities, provide brief seminars and workshops on software skills (SPSS, Evie's software, and R), as well as entrepreneurship.

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