How Universities Can Create Green Jobs for Students

Introduction

Green is great, and with diligence, will become even better.” The term ‘green jobs’ refer to employment in a narrowly defined set of industries providing environmental services or can be regarded as those associated with environmental objectives and policies. UNEP has adopted a definition that attempts to incorporate aspects of job content as well as the characteristics of industry goods and services [1]. It defines ‘green’ jobs as “work in agricultural, manufacturing, research and development (R&D), administrative, and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that help to protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution.” However, UNEP adds that “green jobs need to be decent work, i.e. good jobs which offer adequate wages, safe working conditions, job security, reasonable career prospects, and worker rights. People’s livelihoods and sense of dignity are bound up tightly with their jobs. UNEP suggest that, at a conservative estimate, there were more than 2.3 million jobs in the renewable energy sector around the world in 2006, and more in construction, providing improved energy efficiency in buildings, in low-carbon transport and in other environmental activities but that compares with an employed labor force globally of around 1.8 billion.

The OECD has noted that “green jobs is gaining support as a way to pursue economic growth and development, while preventing environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and unsustainable natural resource use” [2]. UNEP (2011) [3] has argued that “the greening of economies is not generally a drag on growth but rather a new engine of growth; that it is a net generator of decent jobs, and that it is also a vital strategy for the elimination of persistent poverty.” The recent global economic downturn triggered many proposals for ‘green’ fiscal stimuli to promote growth and, in particular, jobs [4]. The OECD has also suggested that investing in green activities has significant job creation potential [5].

While green jobs will be found across all industries and at all levels of education, the largest number of green jobs will be in occupations that require an apprenticeship, professional certificate, or one to two years of post secondary education. Heating and air ventilation workers are needed to install more efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems; sheet metal workers are in demand in the production of wind turbines, dignified mobile toilet (DMT) which will help in promoting environmental cleanliness and hygiene and it was a form of eco-sanitation (convert sanitation waste into cooking gas and other gases that could be used to generate electricity to homes and offices), and promoting research in “next generation” biofuels.

For the Universities to be prepared to survive into the next century, they must not only respond to the new force, but they must also provide leadership for broader society. The universities must be a change agent and must become learning organisations, as well as teaching and research institution. The universities should work with student to develop their skills and drive the necessary improvements to change to a more circular thinking, keep students up to date with the latest sustainable technology, so they can maintain a competitive edge in the market place and should provide classes for student in the area of green jobs. “Most of the technologies are young in terms of their developmental cycle, so it’s difficult to say where the biggest growth will be. It’s not only wind and solar power: there are many other exciting areas including hydrogen, biofuels and coal-to liquid technology. In general, current graduates are much more environmentally savvy than the previous generation, but many universities in Nigeria are still not offering ‘green’ courses. It’s a challenge to get more students interested in what is a very technical domain,” “The single most important
step to address the global energy needs is education.” “The education is more process-driven, to get students to understand the technologies, than tell them this is what the future is going to be.”

However, studies on green jobs in Nigeria is scant and spotty. Studies largely focus on the direct effects of particular activities on employment. Although few individuals are doing a great job in the area of building inverters of various features, electrical and solar installation of inverters, biogas plants (which raw materials are source from septic tanks, abattoirs and mobile toilet) etc.

The Federal Government is urged to strengthen the capacity of the universities and similar institutions in their bid to enhance effort in creating opportunities and to expend huge amount of money in the area of green jobs for the youths to ensure sustainable environment and development. There is need for collaborative stakeholders, agencies, NGOs and academic institution and other global initiatives in the quest to bequeath to the nation a responsible and working youths and it is precisely challenging to compete without government assistance because of their higher costs. There is no gainsaying the fact that the economic strength of Nigeria in these 21st century is hinged on the viability of its green jobs.

References