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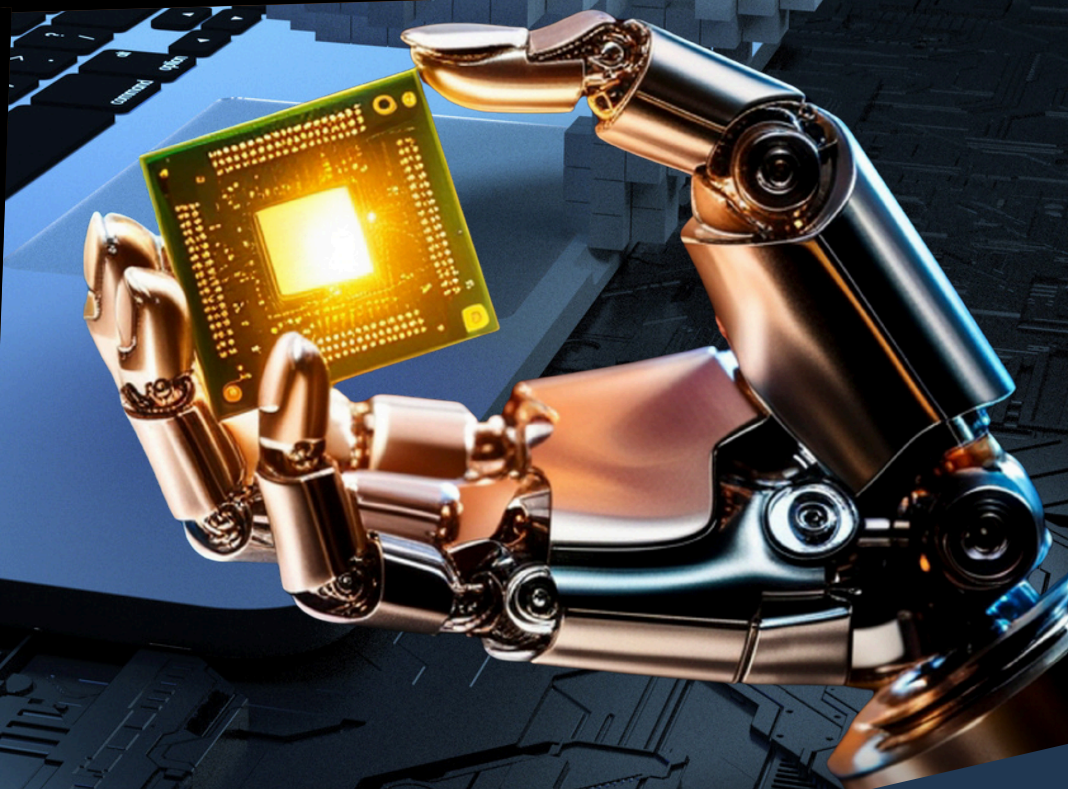


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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GREEN SKILLS IN MALAYSIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

As Malaysia advances toward sustainable development, the transition to a low-carbon economy is expected to have a profound impact on labour markets and the composition of workforce skills. International organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have similarly underscored the growing significance of green skills in low- and middle-income countries. In Malaysia, this transformation is reshaping the labour market by altering industry demands and intensifying the need for competencies related to energy efficiency, carbon management, and other green technologies. According to TalentCorp's impact study, the global shift toward a green economy is creating new employment opportunities. Research indicates a rising demand for roles that support this transition, including Renewable Energy Engineers, Environmental Data Analysts, Waste Management Specialists, Energy Auditors, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Experts. These positions highlight the increasing need for specialised expertise in sustainability and environmental responsibility across various industries. This transformation is further reinforced by national policy frameworks, including the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP) and the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR), which emphasise that green growth is essential rather than optional.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GREEN SKILLS

Green skills are increasingly vital for occupations emerging from the global transition toward a greener economy across high-, middle-, and low-income countries (Bianchi, 2020). These emerging roles demand specialised knowledge and competencies related to sustainable practices, environmental management, and green technologies. At the same time, green skills are equally crucial for workers in existing occupations. As economies adopt more sustainable modes of production and consumption, many traditional jobs are undergoing substantial changes in task structures and responsibilities. Consequently, workers must acquire green skills to remain productive and relevant in evolving labour markets.

In the Malaysian context, the significance of green skills can be examined across several interconnected dimensions: economic, environmental, labour market, and social development. Such an examination is particularly relevant as the country advances toward sustainable growth.

First, green skills play a crucial role in supporting economic transformation and enhancing national competitiveness. Malaysia's transition toward a low-carbon, high-value economy depends on a workforce equipped with sustainability-related competencies. The greening of the economy has the potential to stimulate economic growth and strengthen the foundation of national welfare (Dell'Anna, 2021). As international markets increasingly emphasise environmental sustainability, sectors such as renewable energy, green manufacturing, sustainable construction, and electric mobility require skilled workers proficient in energy efficiency, carbon accounting, environmental management, and green technologies. Thus, developing these capabilities improves Malaysia's global competitiveness, attracts green investments, and facilitates access to environmentally regulated export markets.

Second, green skills are essential for strengthening employment outcomes and workforce resilience. The transition to a green economy is reshaping labour demand, creating new jobs while transforming existing ones. Green skills enable workers and graduates to remain employable as carbon-intensive industries evolve or decline. To fully realise the growth potential of a green economy, the workforce must acquire new competencies applicable to both emerging and existing occupations (Pinkse, 2024). In Malaysia, reskilling and upskilling in green areas can reduce structural unemployment and support a just transition, particularly in sectors such as energy, manufacturing, and agriculture.

Third, green skills help align education systems with labour market requirements. Integrating sustainability-related competencies into higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes allows Malaysia to better prepare graduates for future employment opportunities. This alignment enhances graduate employability and ensures that human capital development is closely linked to national sustainability objectives.

Fourth, green skills are fundamental to achieving Malaysia's national policy goals and climate commitments. Effective implementation of initiatives such as the 13MP, the NETR, and Malaysia's commitments under the Paris Agreement requires a capable workforce. This workforce must support renewable energy expansion, emissions reduction, sustainable infrastructure development, and environmental governance.

Fifth, workers equipped with green skills contribute directly to environmental sustainability and improved resource efficiency. In Malaysia, such competencies are critical for mitigating environmental degradation, enhancing energy efficiency, managing natural resources sustainably, and addressing climate-related risks associated with urbanisation and industrialisation.

Finally, green skills promote social inclusion and inclusive sustainable development. The expansion of green sectors generates employment opportunities across different skill levels, including in rural and semi-urban areas, through activities such as solar energy installation, sustainable agriculture, and waste management. These employment opportunities, in turn, support income generation, reduce inequality, and advance Malaysia's broader sustainable development agenda.

CONCLUSION

Green skills are essential to Malaysia's transition toward a sustainable and low-carbon economy. They are critical for emerging green occupations and for transforming existing jobs as industries adopt more sustainable practices. In Malaysia, green skills support economic competitiveness, enhance workforce employability, and enable effective implementation of national policies such as the 13th Malaysia Plan and the National Energy Transition Roadmap. Moreover, green skills contribute to environmental sustainability and promote inclusive growth by creating diverse employment opportunities. Therefore, strengthening green skill development is vital to ensuring that Malaysia's green transition is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable.

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