



# Future Fit: The Green Advantage- Education, Employment, Empowerment



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# Addressing the Green Skills Gap: The Urgent Need for Sustainability Education

Between 2018 and 2023, green jobs grew by 9.2% annually, while green talent only increased by 5.4%, leading to a significant mismatch in the green sector (See Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Following the success of COP 28 in the UAE, there has been an increased focus on the 'green transition' as the world demonstrates stronger commitment towards adopting sources of renewable energy, and more sustainable practices.

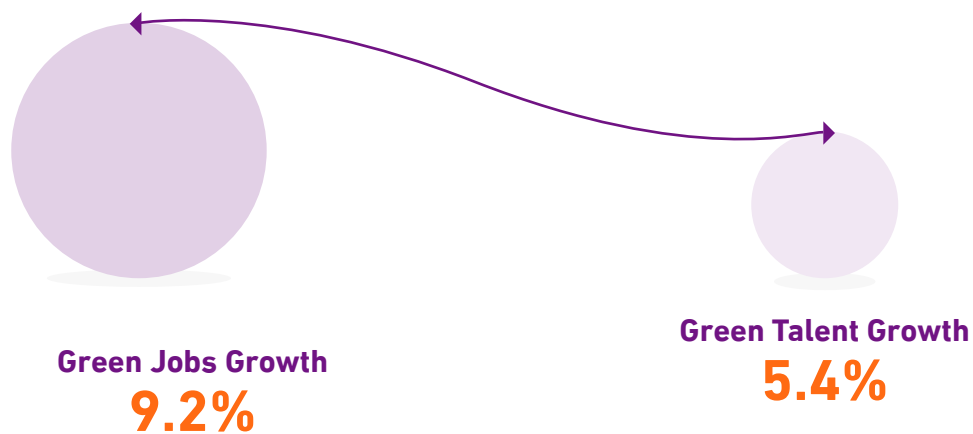


Figure 1. Mismatch in Growth

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change defines green skills as 'the technical knowledge, expertise, and abilities that enable the effective use of green technologies and processes in professional settings'. Green education and skills are important in driving the green transition, accelerating economic growth, and fostering the creation of 30 million green jobs by 2030.<sup>2</sup> A shift towards more sustainable practices and greener economies is increasing the demand for green skills.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LinkedIn. (2023). Global Green Skills Report 2023.

<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum. (2023). The Future of Jobs 2023.

<sup>3</sup> LinkedIn. (2022). Global Green Skills Report.



The MENA region, where the skills deficit reached **70%** in **2022**<sup>4</sup>, requires a strong commitment to lifelong learning and sustainability education to equip its workforce with necessary green skills. The UAE is the first country in the Middle East to commit to Net Zero **2050** goal resulting in an estimate of **83,000** new green jobs to be created by **2030**<sup>5</sup>.

Additional strategies and initiatives that are driving the shift to a greener economy include the UAE Green Agenda, which aims to boost the competitive knowledge economy, reduce the country's emissions and promote green life and a sustainable use of resources.

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation (AGF) follows a collaborative approach to advance its work on education, exchanging ideas and expertise with all parties involved. Among the stakeholders who have a role to play in making sure new generations are endowed with the necessary green skills are policy makers, the private sector, educational institutions, youth and their families.

4 International Monetary Fund. (2022). THE BASIC SKILLS GAP

5 UAE Ministry of CLimate Change & Environment. (2019). UAE Green Jobs Program: Jobs & skills for the UAE's Green Economy Transformation.





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”When we think about a sustainable future for all, it is crucial to view our youth not as mere statistics. They are the reservoir of knowledge and talent that hold within them the vibrant promise of our collective future. At the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, we work with our strategic partners to instill a sustainable mindset in our youth, ensuring that the skills they learn and the knowledge they acquire is viewed through the lens of sustainability.”

**Malakeh El Haj**

Vice President, Knowledge and Innovation  
The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation



# Integrating Green Skills and Sustainability into Education

As the jobs market evolves, there is a growing need for specialized education to prepare youth for employment, and for those already in work to embrace upskilling and reskilling. Upskilling means moving into niche categories within a particular field; reskilling is developing new knowledge and expertise beyond a person's original educational foundation. Education can be an indispensable tool for upskilling and reskilling youth by training them to embrace lifelong learning even after they have left the formal academic system.







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“For professionals, the need for reskilling and upskilling has always been a priority to remain market relevant. Now, more than ever, it is important that companies have clear strategies as well as reskilling and upskilling initiatives as part of their green transition and growth plans”

**Maria Flouda**

Founder, Sustainability Switch Consultancy

### Sustainability education and skill-building initiatives ought to be:



**Research-driven:** Use technology and data to conduct detailed research, pinpointing essential skills required by the market, aligning educational efforts, and delivering tailored solutions.



**Localized:** Customize the content of programs to specific challenges, cultures, and industries to ensure that solutions are relevant to the local context and ensure youth are prepared for the jobs market they will enter.



**Balanced:** Equip individuals with a comprehensive set of transferable skills (such as leadership, storytelling, pitching and critical thinking); green skills; and specialized technical skills to prepare them for different green roles.



**Integrated:** Incorporate sustainability education into all levels of education – from early learning to universities and vocational courses – to match the needs of the green job market.



**Interdisciplinary:** Equip professionals with transferrable, interdisciplinary skills that enable them to succeed within the dynamic job market characterized by digital and green transformations.





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”Education is not only about knowledge, but also about action that is grounded in science and a commitment to sustainability and lifelong learning. When we are informed about the impact of our actions, we can make conscious choices. We can reduce our carbon footprint, minimize our waste, and create a positive impact on individual and societal levels.”

**Dr. Jasmina Locke**

Chief Executive Officer  
SEE Institute





## Call to Action: Mobilizing Stakeholders for Sustainable Education

To facilitate the green transition, insights from across the board will help steer what each group of vital stakeholders should consider when addressing sustainability education.

### Policy makers can:

- **Embrace a comprehensive understanding of sustainability principles** to drive economic growth and meet emerging market demands.
- **Invest in talent development, promoting lifelong learning among students and employees** and equipping them with green skills.

- **Embrace innovation** by integrating emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), which can forecast trends in the green sector.
- **Build strategic partnerships** to enhance the transition from education to employment, developing skilled professionals with practical, market-driven sustainability education.
- **Actively engage youth** to equip them with essential skills to address sustainability challenges and support the green transition.

### The private sector can:

# Educators can:

- **Channel their creativity and build entrepreneurial skills** to drive sustainable change through innovative programs that address environmental challenges.
- **Acquire hands-on green knowledge and skills** through volunteering in sustainability-focused initiatives.
- **Leverage technological advancements and best practices** to create personalized, gamified, and hands-on content, to instill sustainability concepts.
- **Integrate sustainability across different education stages, encouraging critical thinking and lifelong learning** to promote green habits, help youth analyze their sources, and avoid misinformation.

# Youth can:

As stakeholders – including government, philanthropies, employers, educators and youth – ambitiously pursue sustainable practices, collective and coordinated effort rooted in strategic collaboration is vital in developing sustainability-focused curriculums and actionable policies. By adopting a forward-looking approach, innovation, and strategic partnerships, stakeholders can nurture a skilled workforce that accelerates the green transition.





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”Embedding sustainability within the curriculum is vital. However, as stakeholders we need to keep in mind that it must embody a comprehensive approach, embracing technical proficiency and transferable skills. It should harness emerging technologies and inventive methodologies to seamlessly blend theoretical knowledge with practical application, fostering entrepreneurial capabilities and instilling a proactive education-to-action mindset.”

**Professor Evangelos Moustakas,**

Executive Director of Lifelong Learning  
Heriot-Watt University





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