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Literature Review: The Green Economy, Clean Energy Policy and Employment

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Abstract

The relationship between the green economy and employment is never as simple as it appears. This article analyses this relationship based on studies of clean energy policies in different countries. Through literature studies, we found that the green economy has positive effects on employment in both developing and developed countries, while the results can alter according to the type of measurement adopted. However, the Green economy can also have negative effects in some countries like Spain. Moreover, it may shape the labor market in another way if policy influence is taken into consideration. Finally, we must realize that there are some problems with the current researches in this area, such as the lack of studies on different countries and energy types, inadequate theoretical support, limited analysis of such relationship, and so on. We suggest that scholars should focus on mechanisms whereby this relationship is influenced and policies to regulate such relationships in further researches.

Keywords: Green economy and employment; literature review; clean energy

1. Introduction

The green economy, which will be a new direction for the future economy, has attracted extensive attention from scholars due to its effects, especially its employment effect. UNEP has stated that a green economy creates jobs and enhances social equity (UNEP, 2011), showing the positive effect of the green economy on the labor market. The International Labor Organization also believes that the green economy can create millions of job opportunities.

Not only corporations but governments also make every effort to encourage the green economy, in order to boost the labor market. Barack Obama set the goal that 25% energy in the United States will be generated by renewable sources by 2025 (Pollion R, Heintz J, et al. 2009). The National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 2010 put a green economy as the top

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priority in the belief that it will be an employment economy. From the standpoint of the government, the development of the green economy will greatly increase the number of job opportunities.

However, the different empirical experiences in different countries reveal more complex employment effects. For example, Spain and German reflect a very distinctive situation, as the green economy in these countries has a negative effect on green jobs. Green programs in Spain have destroyed 2.2 jobs for every green job created. Moreover, all fuel technologies create more jobs per unit energy than coal and natural gas (Max Wei, Shana Patadia, et al., 2009).

Can the green economy create a large number of new positions? If so, what is the exact number? If not, what is its real influence?

Actually, from the former research, we can see that there is never a simple Yes/No answer. The understanding of the term employment 'varies' among scholars (Borel-saladin J M, Turok I N.,Konopnicki, Pollin R Cetin M Erican N, 2012, 2009,2011). Some scholars consider inner mechanisms while others do not. As the result, the same situation can lead to completely different conclusions depending on the person who studies it and the method he or she uses, so a clear literature review is needed.

This paper consists of five sections. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 focuses on the literature. Section 3 reveals some research methods. Section 4 analyses some gaps in the current literature. Section 5 summarizes the conclusions and author's views.

2. Introduction

2.1. Green economy and employment

2.1.1 Definitions of a green economy

Green economy

The concept of a green economy was firstly mentioned by the famous economist Pearce, who suggested that the environment and economy necessarily interact (Pearce, 1989). UNEP gives a clear definition of a green economy in the report: a green economy is one that concentrates on human and natural factors, and also can create high-salary jobs (UNEP, 2007). In 2011 UNEP enriches the meaning of 'green' to refer to an economy that is not only efficient but also fair, ensuring a just transition to an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive. (UNEP, 2011)

A green economy and energy policy

A green economy has an inner relationship with a clean energy policy, and has a more politically applied focus (UNEP). The real value of environmental services and the real costs to the environment are included in national policies (Fulai, Sheng, et al. 2011). The first sector of the green economy is renewable energy (Karl Burkart, 2009). The development of new energy depends on policy (Guo, 2011). So, a green economy needs the support of public policy.

Energy policy and employment

A green economy has the character of public goods. In a green economy, growth in income and employment should be driven by both public and private investment (UNEP, 2011). Greening the economy has great potential to stimulate growth globally (UNEP, 2011). Renewable energy can be a driver for employment (Apergis N, Payne JE, 2010).

2.1.2 Classification of jobs and employment

Green jobs

The definition of a green job varies from person to person, but all agree that green jobs are jobs linked to the environment and clean energy. Some believes that green jobs can be defined as jobs that involve protecting wildlife or ecosystems, reducing pollution or waste, or reducing energy usage and lowering

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