

**Green guidance:**  
**Enhancing the role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that the material that is submitted in this Dissertation towards the award of the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than the part-fulfilment of the award named above.

Christabel Saliba

30<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## Abstract

This research explored the crucial link between climate change and sustainable careers, emphasising how professional decisions can shape a more environmentally responsible future. The study delved into the intersections of climate change, sustainability, and career guidance in state secondary schools in Malta. It investigated how career guidance practitioners perceived and implemented sustainability and aimed to uncover factors supporting or hindering the integration of eco-friendly principles into career guidance work.

This dissertation adopted an interpretive approach to investigate an under-researched area of green career guidance in Maltese government secondary schools. The research questions guided the exploration, and in response to the identified needs, a digital manual, *Uncovering green guidance – A practical manual for career guidance practitioners*, was developed to empower career guidance practitioners and serve as a comprehensive resource for integrating green guidance into their practices.

Exploring career guidance practices in Maltese state secondary schools revealed a critical need for enhancing green guidance integration. Pressing issues included a lack of awareness and knowledge about sustainability, student resistance towards career-related matters, insufficient human and time resources, and concerns about impartiality. The study highlighted the importance of empowerment and proposed strategies to equip career guidance practitioners for effective green guidance integration. The need for a paradigm shift towards embedded sustainability mindsets was highlighted, emphasising the transformative role of well-informed practitioners and continuous professional development. This study contributed unique insights to

the Maltese context, serving as a starting point for a more environmentally conscious approach to secondary school career guidance.

Keywords: green guidance, career guidance, sustainable careers, environmental sustainability, digital manual

*To my husband, Matthew, my rock and greatest supporter. Your unwavering encouragement, love, and understanding have been the driving force behind my academic journey. This dissertation is dedicated to you, with heartfelt gratitude for being my constant inspiration.*

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# 1 Introduction

In an ever-accelerating era of climate change, the decisions made in present times can have a lasting impact that extends beyond current generations. Traditional economic models prioritise production and consumption to boost prosperity (The Investopedia Team, 2021). However, this growth-centric approach raises environmental sustainability concerns, especially in the face of the climate crisis (Mebunii, 2022). In connection to this issue, it is essential to consider the notion of ‘planned obsolescence’, a deliberate strategy to make products obsolete within a specified timeframe, ensuring continuous consumer demand and promoting disposal over repair (Kenton, 2022). Such a consumerist culture amplifies emissions from manufacturing and disposal, which, in turn, enlarges individuals’ carbon footprint as they seek products with high energy consumption, like cars and electronics (Teugels, 2023). In this regard, it is crucial to conduct a thorough reassessment of the environmental impacts of our societies (Raatikainen et al., 2021). Changes in lifestyle, as discussed by O’Donoghue (2020), including alterations in diet and minimising air travel, represent tangible actions, as noted by Hašková (2020). This shift is critical, particularly in veering away from consumerism that adversely impacts climate change.

The term ‘sustainable development’ is applied across a broad spectrum of scenarios (Adams, 2009). For this dissertation, the United Nations’ (1987) definition will be applied, which encourages addressing present needs without compromising those of future generations, thereby incorporating a sustainable growth perspective. In response to climate change challenges, varied economic models have emerged as

alternative approaches, including degrowth and green growth economics. The latter gained momentum, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO, 2022), whereby the concept of bringing an end to “consumerism” created a particular underlying attraction (Piper, 2021). This signifies a shift towards a transformation in people’s lifestyles.

In a challenging job market, young people face messages pushing increased consumption. Yet, current resource usage, equivalent to 1.5 planets, is unsustainable. Without change, by the 2030s, two Earths would be needed to sustain the world, so shifting to a green economy is central, involving everyone, from governments to industries, communities, and young people, through daily actions and job choices (UNEP, 2012). Green economics places sustainable economic growth at its core. As the shift towards a green economy aims to address environmental challenges and promote equity through sustainable measures, career guidance practitioners are tasked with the crucial responsibility of adapting to labour market changes (CICA, 2023b; Irving and Malik-Liévano, 2019; McMahon, 2020; TedS, 2023).

Career guidance practitioners play a role in the awareness, exposure, and support of current and upcoming sustainable career opportunities (Bors Borbély-Pecze, 2021; NCGE, 2022b; Purchase, 2019) to maintain sufficient labour provision (Cedefop, 2012). Therefore, while the capacity for substantial growth in new environmentally focused job opportunities exists, tapping into this necessitates the establishment of an appropriate workforce in terms of employment skills preparation (GAIN, 2017). Nonetheless, a deficiency is still evident even if such skills are on the increase, requiring further efforts to enable workers to meet the green skills requirements of

the labour market (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022). Recognising this deficit, it becomes evident that with shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration, there is a pressing need to investigate how career guidance can contribute to sustainable career decision-making. In this context, it is essential to highlight the urgency of addressing climate change and sustainability in the context of career guidance.

## **1.1 Rationale**

This dissertation explored the crucial link between climate change and sustainable careers. It demonstrated how these paths can shape a world where every professional decision becomes a building block towards a more environmentally responsible future. Thus, the importance of sustainable career guidance has necessitated a critical examination of its role in shaping the future of individuals and the environment. Underpinned by a comprehensive literature review, this research delved into the intersections of climate change, sustainability, and career guidance, particularly in the context of local secondary schools in Malta.

Malta is committed to its green transition as an EU member, yet it faces developmental limitations in its green economy (European Commission, 2022a). To meet its 2030 goals, as set by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015), the country's plan integrates environmental sustainability and social well-being (European Commission, 2022a). Thus, Malta's pledge to sustainability and green transition creates a pressing need for effective career guidance in the context of environmental stewardship while also supporting international

sustainability goals. Local sustainability efforts involve educational initiatives across school subjects. While these undertakings promote sustainable attitudes and practices, the link between environmental sustainability and career choices remains underdeveloped, as careers and green practices are considered separate matters, disregarding the interconnection of work and the natural environment (Montt et al., 2018). This demonstrates that in a world that is striving towards a green transition in the name of sustainability, students need guidance that bridges the gap between environmental awareness and career planning (ILO, 2022).

McKenzie (2020) stressed the importance of career guidance practitioners staying current with upcoming skills requirements. In this regard, local career advisors within educational institutions, guidance teachers, and Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD) teachers have assigned responsibilities that tackle students' career development. However, information on local green guidance practices is lacking. This raises questions about potentially hindering students' access to green careers (ILO, 2022).

Thus, this study explored how a particular group of individuals working in local secondary schools, responsible for career guidance, perceive and put sustainability into action. Furthermore, it sought to uncover the factors that support or impede the incorporation of eco-friendly principles into their career guidance work. By highlighting the existing gaps in sustainability practices and emphasising the necessity for a fundamental shift in values, this study contributes to the importance of local green career guidance for a sustainable future.

## 1.2 Researcher's orientation

Career guidance can empower youths to realise their potential as changemakers and their contribution towards sustainability, which can be supported by appropriate education (Nota et al., 2020). As a PSCD and guidance teacher for the past 20 years, my interest in this area stemmed from addressing the needs of students in preparation for employment within a dynamic labour market. When reflecting on the significance of sustainability in my life, especially regarding waste reduction through everyday practices like donating books and clothes, its importance has deepened over time. It has extended beyond mindful consumption to involve meaningful and lasting actions. As an individual, I prioritise long-term considerations in my undertakings, and this heightened awareness results from personal reflection, continuous education, and an understanding of the global impact of individual choices. It influences my everyday life and how I approached this research, instilling a strong commitment to positive change. Career guidance practitioners have a part to play in creating awareness of sustainable career opportunities (NCGE, 2022b). However, literature on how local career guidance practitioners address the area of green and sustainable career choices is absent. This gap set forth my choice of a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with practitioners (career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers) working within Maltese government secondary schools. This research aimed to uncover the role of career guidance in relation to green guidance within Maltese government secondary schools. This was made possible through a comprehensive literature review which addressed the overarching concerns and

varying perceptions and attitudes towards shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration.

### **1.3 Dissertation structure**

This dissertation is structured into two integral parts, each serving a distinct purpose. Part A, named “Theoretical foundations, inquiry, and analysis”, offers a scholarly exploration of the research topic, incorporating a comprehensive literature review, research methodology, findings, and discussion. It concludes with recommendations based on key insights. The second segment, Part B, entitled “Uncovering green guidance – A practical manual for career guidance practitioners”, is designed to bridge theory and practice. It is a tangible outcome of the academic exploration, aiming to fill identified gaps by providing a practical resource for career guidance practitioners in secondary school settings.

The theoretical framework not only serves an informative role but also shapes the practical guidance expressed in the manual. This relationship is characterised by interdependence, where the academic content and the manual mutually enhance and complement each other. The insights gathered from the theoretical aspects are systematically translated into actionable steps within the manual, underscoring that the manual is not a mere addition but a direct development of the academic exploration.

### *1.3.1 Part A: Theoretical foundations, inquiry, and analysis*

Following this introductory chapter, this dissertation provides a comprehensive exploration of the research topic through a literature review that offers a foundation of existing knowledge and theoretical frameworks relevant to the study. The methodology section outlines the research design and data collection techniques employed. The findings and analysis chapter presents the findings and their interpretation, revealing key insights. Subsequently, the discussion section integrates these findings within the context of the literature and examines their implications. The conclusion summarises the key findings and insights, while the recommendations section offers practical guidance for stakeholders and future research directions. The upcoming literature review chapter delves into career adaptation to climate shifts whilst tackling green career guidance, including its benefits and challenges in its integration, with particular reference to the Maltese scenario.

### *1.3.2 Part B: Applied strategies – A practical manual*

As an individual driven by the aspiration to initiate change through my research, I aimed for this dissertation to yield tangible outcomes beyond merely exploring literature or theoretical understanding of current circumstances. My objective was to directly address the identified gap in a practical and concrete manner.

Consequently, this dissertation served as the cornerstone for the creation of a supplementary manual tailored for career guidance practitioners working in secondary school settings. The manual's objectives encompass an overview of green

career guidance principles and their significance within the current global context, emphasising the benefits of green guidance integration, offering practical strategies, and supplying resources for practitioners. It further aims to support career guidance practitioners in fostering environmental responsibility and empowering young people through guided reflections to become agents of change in their future careers.

Additionally, the manual's flexibility allows for varied usage, serving as a foundation for discussions and training sessions. Career advisors can adapt its use to fit diverse contexts, covering specific sections as needed or employing it as a monthly awareness tool throughout the academic year. Its applicability extends to small group interventions or integration into various events such as career weeks, expos, seminars, and orientation visits. Ultimately, the manual's adaptability empowers career guidance practitioners to adapt its use to their students' unique circumstances and needs. The manual offers a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between sustainable practices and career development by presenting four key themes: climate change, sustainability, green economics, and green guidance.

## Part A: Theoretical foundations, inquiry, and analysis

## 2 Literature review

This chapter provides an overview of the current trends and relevant literature surrounding the area of climate change and sustainability in relation to the field of career guidance and how this urgent matter has reshaped the meaning of careers. The notion of green guidance is introduced as an approach that can enhance the role of career guidance practitioners working within educational settings. This literature review aims to synthesise various perspectives on the green transition and its implications. Several initiatives undertaken by leading organisations, particularly the United Nations (UN), are explored in this chapter. The reviewed literature also notes how leading countries like Ireland have developed green career guidance approaches. This includes incorporating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within career guidance practices. Special reference is made to the Maltese educational scenario regarding existing methods and resources in sustainability. Subsequently, the presented literature and current resources outlined in this chapter provided a basis for demonstrating progressive trends in the field. These can inform the implementation of green guidance in Maltese secondary schools by exploring the intersection of environmental consciousness and career choices.

Furthermore, references are drawn from this review for a manual designed for local secondary school career guidance practitioners. More detail on this manual is provided in the methodology chapter.

## 2.1 Shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration

Shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration are impacting people's lifestyles and working patterns (ILO, 2019; Thornton et al., 2019). Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) asserted that careers define our interaction with the world, moulding our perspectives, which evolve together with changes in employment. Despite scientists' forewarning for society to heed the climate crisis since the 1970s, global environmental degradation persists (Raatikainen et al., 2021). Hooley sustained that "it is the defining issue of our times" (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) linked to the Anthropocene era. Bennett et al. (2016) defined this as the era in which human activities significantly impact the Earth's environment and climate. Research reveals that average temperatures in recent years have been significantly elevated and experienced sharper increases than any period traced in historical data collection (World Bank Group, 2021). Human actions in this epoch have caused adverse environmental impacts through fossil fuel usage, deforestation, uncontrolled consumption, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, leading to global warming (Ahmed, 2023; Dubery et al., 2023; World Bank Group, 2021). Climate change also influences employment (Drury & Richard, 2019) through its "inescapable presence" (Ro, 2022), where it can unfairly exacerbate challenges for those already in vulnerable circumstances (ILO, 2019). Growing efforts to combat the adverse outcomes of climate change compel the labour market to increase its need for green competencies and careers (ILO, 2022). Jobs within green economies would need to be converted to become greener (GAIN, 2017), increasing the requirement for proper education and training to address employment skill needs related to these changes

(United Nations, 2018). In essence, employees with the required competencies may easily traverse the labour market (Thornton et al., 2019).

Over time, climate change and sustainability issues are increasingly becoming more widespread in public discourse, media coverage, and everyday conversations (Hašková, 2020). Buyers strive to uphold ethical consumption by prioritising product sustainability (Yildirim, 2023). Conscious awareness among nations about this pressing matter has intensified and led to action in mitigating the climate crisis by implementing more environmentally friendly and sustainable systems. To ensure clarity and establish a consistent reference to sustainability and its relevant context, the following definition will serve as the principal reference underpinning sustainability references throughout this dissertation. “Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987, p. 15). However, ‘sustainability’ may sometimes be used without considering its social aspect, often connected solely with the environment (Agirreazkuenaga, 2020). This underscores the need not solely for ecological justice in addressing environmental degradation but also a strong call for social justice. In practice, this issue has been the force behind numerous initiatives and policies worldwide towards greener economies, also called the green transition.

Nonetheless, merely endorsing global agreements is insufficient; it is crucial to uphold national commitments and follow through with their execution for the sustainability journey to yield positive outcomes (ILO, 2019). Such practice includes regular progress reports, relying on global metrics, including data and statistics, to

assess the development and identify challenges in achieving the established Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2023), which are explored further on. Eurostat also releases these reports to provide coverage at the European level regarding SDGs' accomplishment (European Commission, 2023). Hence, in addition to providing a platform for proposed enhancements, performance updates play a vital role in fostering transparency and upholding accountability among countries committed to sustainability goals.

This section delved into climate shifts, ecological degradation, and ongoing mitigation efforts, significantly shaping perceptions and attitudes towards climate change, as discussed in the forthcoming section.

### *2.1.1 Perceptions and attitudes towards climate change*

Distinct generational characteristics shape varied perspectives on climate change, an issue deeply internalised by younger generations (Horn-Muller, 2021). Building on this concept and this dissertation's central theme: enhancing career guidance in secondary schools, considering Horn-Muller's claims is essential when engaging with young people in these contexts. In fact, younger cohorts have notably voiced their concerns and pressed for prompt action from the authorities to address climate change and ensure the well-being of both present and upcoming generations through environmental preservation (European Commission, 2022b). In a survey conducted by Deloitte (2021), climate change was indicated as a leading concern among young individuals from 45 countries spanning across America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Some participants also indicated that they had adjusted their purchases based on the environmental effects of particular businesses.

Comparably, Ro (2022) discussed how young workers in various countries face increased eco-anxiety compared to earlier generations, and they are channelling this concern towards careers that “combine flexibility and a deep sense of purpose”. The young generation’s core values are evident in their heightened focus on social activism in contrast to earlier generations, as well as their strong preference for employment within organisations that share their values (Deloitte, 2022). These findings highlight worldwide youth concern about climate change and how this generation notably adopts a transformative mindset. This has implications for policymakers, businesses, and institutions adapting to these values to attract workers. Additionally, such a perspective can strengthen the green transition, with willing participants possessing pertinent values to address climate change. Given this situation, involving young people in policymaking drafts is crucial, especially since such decisions impact their future directly (ILO, 2020). Maggi (2019) encouraged such engagement as this empowers younger generations to “become invested in shaping their societies’ futures” (Rana et al., 2020, p. 327).

The contemporary world conveys intricate and dynamic realities that impact individuals in terms of opportunities and challenges, and apart from being able to find their way through these complex circumstances, it should also be beneficial for them (OECD, 2020). In connection with this, the PISA survey, conducted by the OECD, assesses students at the end of their compulsory schooling on knowledge, skills, and essential global competencies beyond academics to gauge education

system quality and readiness for a changing world (OECD, 2014). In the 2018 PISA survey, 15-year-olds from 79 countries, including Malta, were surveyed about their views on climate change. Mann (2022) noted that most students perceived school as a setting for discussions and acquiring knowledge about environmental matters. However, those with limited environmental awareness and knowledge were exceedingly confident about natural solutions to environmental challenges, highlighting the need for better education. PISA 2018 also revealed students' helplessness to bring about change and a lack of intrigue in green professions.

Various factors can contribute to feelings of powerlessness, including limited awareness, as indicated earlier, the disheartening nature of climate change, and the impact of one's surroundings. Schinko (2020) also highlighted another significant element: the perception that one's efforts are in vain. He maintained that when individuals or groups, particularly "youth-led initiatives" (pp. 21-22), believe their actions do not influence climate policy, they may become discouraged and lose motivation to persist. This is why Schinko underscored the necessity to give appropriate weight to the younger generations' proactive actions towards sustainability.

To reinforce support for sustainable development from a career perspective, Mann (2022) stressed the importance of real-world work experiences, career talks, job fairs, and workplace visits for developing professional skills. Early interactions with career advisors were also deemed instrumental in career planning. This parallels Pirzada et al.'s (2023) findings, whereby study participants emphasised the importance of early

promotion of green skills in learners' foundational education to ensure their use throughout their training and future careers.

Overall, the research findings accentuate the importance of understanding generational approaches towards climate change and the need to incorporate these perspectives into education and career guidance. While younger generations give precedence to environmental concerns and purpose-driven careers (Horn-Muller, 2021; European Commission, 2022b; Deloitte, 2021, 2022; Ro, 2022), the PISA 2018 survey revealed gaps in environmental education and the necessity of providing practical experiences to prepare students for the complexities of the contemporary world (Mann, 2020). However, essential to note are the sample differences concerning the age groups where the PISA survey was composed of younger cohorts than the ones used for the Deloitte survey. This age difference may impact variations in perceptions and priorities regarding climate change and career choices.

Thus, understanding the varying attitudes of different generations towards climate change is essential because it sheds light on how the younger generation prioritises environmental issues and values purpose-driven careers. This insight calls for a more holistic approach to education where the focus should not stop at imparting knowledge but expand on fostering values that promote sustainability in career choices for meaningful contributions through career preparation. However, for career guidance to be fruitful, it is essential to comprehend how climate change affects the labour market and subsequently influences career decisions. The following section delves into the implications and challenges of the climate crisis with respect to the

labour market within a neoliberal ideology and explores the role of career guidance in this context.

### *2.1.2 Sustainability within a neoliberal context*

Labour markets have operated amid changes and developments across various eras that require skilled workers to function in different jobs. A number of contributing factors have accelerated labour market transformations and skill requirements (Thornton et al., 2019). Such developments have led to economic growth, but this progress raises concerns about its adverse environmental impact (Drury & Richard, 2019; Mastini, 2018). This calls for the obligation to tackle the repercussions of such climate change impacts.

Nevertheless, Hašková (2020) raised doubts about the feasibility of curbing climate change within the contemporary socio-economical context. Correspondingly, Brancaccio (2023) observed a change in wealthy capitalists' views, expressing concerns about the swift ecological transition and its economic effects. This shift, affecting worker pay, suggests that businesses should bear the costs for the transition to succeed. Rejecting a free-market approach, Brancaccio recommended a new unified strategy to tackle climate matters. This scepticism interrelates with the nature of neoliberalism. This dominant economic ideology in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the environmental crisis by promoting deregulation, overconsumption, and hindering climate change mitigation, as maintained by Randall (2018). He claimed that pursuing profit in liberalised environments led to environmental degradation, primarily due to its short-term focus, conflicting with long-term climate

strategies. Additionally, it deliberately stripped governments of tools such as industry regulation, carbon taxation, and investment in sustainable energy.

Despite encountering challenges and resistance, neoliberalism has changed over the years. Nonetheless, it has left a profound and enduring influence on global policy agendas, societal norms, cultural shifts, and daily life, particularly in domains such as education (Connell & Dados, 2014). However, neoliberalism is a complex system that encompasses both the accumulation of capital and excessive consumption, which have harmful impacts on the environment. Over time, neoliberalism has shown limited concern for environmental issues, whereby, in the past, developing nations were typically advised to prioritise economic growth above all else (Bapna et al., 2019). In relation to this context, an ecological study investigated the relationship between neoliberal capitalist principles, responsibility for climate impact, lifestyle circumstances, and health risks for the population. The findings suggested a consistent association between neoliberal ideology and adverse outcomes of these four factors, and the effect was more pronounced in less culpable countries for global climate change (Lee & Masuda, 2021).

Correspondingly, Bapna et al. (2019) emphasised the environmental impact of economic progress within neoliberal principles. They called for a shift towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy involving transformative changes in economic policies and institutions. Thus, the ideas and principles associated with neoliberalism influence not just individual actions and responsibilities but broader systemic factors that affect the environment. Despite neoliberal ideals promoting a limited government role and reliance on market signals for externalities, the pressing

environmental crises highlight the need for a more ambitious and collaborative effort from the public and private sectors (Bapna et al., 2019).

In the midst of the aforementioned neoliberal outlooks, where “individual responsibility” is resonant (Manning, 2022; Staunton, 2019), collective consciousness is a focal point. As conceptualised by Émile Durkheim, this term refers to the shared “beliefs and sentiments” within a society, which plays a role in maintaining social unity (Oxford Reference, 2023). The benefits of neoliberal policies tend to favour those who are part of the formal economy, creating a divide, and the uneven distribution of benefits has consequences for development and power relationships within a society (Smith, 2023). However, transitioning to a collective consciousness regarding sustainable practices that consider current and future generations is a challenging objective. Hooley (2022a) asserted that neoliberalism is not merely an external influence affecting us but also an inner stimulus, whereby individuals tend to rely on political and economic organisations, deeming them the principal source for how things should be. Monbiot (2016) also highlighted neoliberalism’s prevalent and inescapable presence in daily life, whereby individuals “internalise and reproduce its creeds”. Through this restructuring of individuals’ reasoning (Türken et al., 2016), the agendas of those who are in control are supported (Hooley, 2022a).

Thus, with minimal government involvement and monitoring practices, as embraced by neoliberalism, inadequate policies that allow for societal inequalities may ensue (Manning, 2023), making it challenging to enforce sustainable practices at various levels of society. Within neoliberal settings, financial gains take precedence over

societal well-being (Kumar & Hill, 2012). Even though prioritising profits impacts innovation and economic growth, it could also lead to disregarding long-term sustainability. For this reason, proactive measures are essential to address these challenges.

Pouyaud and Guichard (2018) proposed an analytical perspective that can be applied within career guidance, which challenges the consumerist approach to work and safeguards welfare and the natural environment. Similarly, Irving (2014) and Plant (2015) vehemently stressed the importance of redefining the career guidance domain by challenging the neoliberal approach and building on collective principles that integrate environmental values. Plant recommended the practice of green guidance, which concentrates on career choices that foster sustainability in their execution. The role of green career guidance is discussed further in upcoming sections.

The green transition impacts various segments of society, but it poses a challenge to the employment sector, whereby this needs to revisit expertise enhancements at various skill levels (ILO, 2019). Inevitably, this reality necessitates the formulation of policies. These policies should uphold the goals of optimising job growth, curtailing job reductions, and safeguarding an equitable shift for everyone, considering the ramifications of such a transition on work (GAIN, 2017).

In addition to creating a conducive environment for the effective expansion of education (UNESCO, 2020), the concept of decent work must be integrated into policymaking to uphold fair wages, sound workplace environments, and worker rights (GAIN, 2017). Nonetheless, Tikly (2013, as cited in Khalil, 2017) warned

about policies that are “top-down and perspective-driven rather than inclusive and context-sensitive” (p. 177). To avoid such scenarios, policymakers can contribute by implementing frameworks that foster collaboration among all stakeholders, whereby conservation-oriented advancement and protection of natural resources are applied alongside the expansion of human capital, all with a long-term outlook (UNEP, 2015). Indisputably, these systems need to be monitored, evaluated, and amended accordingly to correct flaws and address unintended effects (ILO, 2022).

In essence, the neoliberal perspective places responsibility on the individual to tackle societal matters, such as sustainability goals. However, it could also indicate discrepancies when addressing challenges, such as the climate crisis, that necessitate synchronised operations. To narrow such a disparity, it is evident that a thorough strategy is needed that fosters individual accountability through empowerment rather than blaming mechanisms. In correspondence with this, the European Union (EU) Council (2019) advocated a cooperative system and maintained that “a joint endeavour” (p. 7) among nations can better serve everyone involved when it comes to addressing sustainable practices within the Member States. On the other hand, it is fundamental to promote an environment of shared awareness and collaborative efforts at different levels of society to strive for mutual objectives. Multiple approaches could be employed to achieve this, including economic adjustments and education, which are discussed in the next section.

## 2.2 Exploring sustainability perspectives and climate change responses

“Thinking radically yet realistically about the future...is difficult” (Bennett et al., 2016, p. 446). Such an approach requires individuals to reflect on the present situation in terms of constraints and opportunities in order to implement specific adjustments that work towards sustainability. Despite significant challenges, numerous countermeasures for climate change are readily accessible, including international agendas, such as the SDGs, that guide sustainable progress (United Nations, 2021). It is worth mentioning that these recent developments are situated within a broader context, as global climate change frameworks have been evolving for years.

Raatikainen et al. (2021) maintained that sustainability can be realised through an approach that lays significant value on the natural world. A value shift is already visible where eco-conscious choices are becoming increasingly prevalent in daily life and a driving force behind tangible behaviours towards sustainability. O’Donoghue (2020) noted that due to a growing consciousness towards sustainability in the light of climate change, individuals have made lifestyle adjustments ranging from cutting air travel and implementing vegan diets to opting for second-hand items (Hašková, 2020). In a wider context, in pursuit of climate crisis mitigation responses, the degrowth and green growth economies are two notable alternative economic models, whereby they focus on contrasting economic strategies to address environmental challenges sustainably. Both economic frameworks are examined in the following

sections, followed by the role of education in their contributions to mitigating the climate crisis.

### *2.2.1 Degrowth economy*

One proposed approach that concentrates on the sustainability journey dates back to 1972 and represents the application of a degrowth economy or, as Fortuna (2022) referred to it, an “ideological tsunami”. From the perspective of Bauhardt (2014), this economic model posits that continuous growth may be pushing humanity towards a climate disaster. She challenged the conventional notion that increasing economic affluence leads to greater individual and social well-being, as the ongoing ecological crisis raises doubts about this traditional link. Thus, Bauhardt encouraged decreased consumption and resource utilisation as a means to mitigate environmental harm. Consequently, while the economic boom has brought about various developments, including vaccines, medical treatment, and commodities, it has also led to more consumption and waste (Piper, 2021). Degrowth economics propose a radical lifestyle change that embraces reduced economic output as a necessary step for preserving the planet (Piper, 2021; Strunz & Schindler, 2018). Additionally, Fortuna (2022) asserted that merely greening consumption by purchasing eco-friendly products is insufficient, and the answer is to curtail consumption by applying a degrowth mindset. She listed several ways this norm shift could be achieved, such as endorsing green business development, shifting away from meat-based diets, opting for smaller houses and electric vehicles, and standardising teleworking.

Nevertheless, Piper (2021) noted an issue with this argument. While downsizing the economy might yield positive climate outcomes, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that impoverished nations suffered not only from the virus itself but also from consumption slowdowns in wealthier countries. This reduced demand for goods and services impacted economies and jobs (Piper, 2021). In light of this, one cannot ignore the implications of degrowth methods to achieve a green transition. On one hand, a slowdown in consumption yielded lower greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality (Ravindra et al., 2022). Then again, socio-economic complexities with such sudden economic shifts must be considered (Nicola et al., 2020), especially in vulnerable countries, as mentioned earlier. Strunz and Schindler (2018) proposed essential economic modifications, such as reducing working hours, alongside compensatory measures aimed at individuals with lower incomes and those who own natural resources. Undeniably, such reforms necessitate careful planning and not simply cutting down on consumption and production, as this impinges on the emphasised just transition that the green shift strives to maintain, focusing on equitable resource distribution rather than endless growth. In this regard, strong leadership is crucial for sustainable growth, requiring constant reassessment by governments and financial institutions (Nicola et al., 2020).

While compelling, exploring the degrowth economy as a radical solution to environmental challenges raises complex socio-economic concerns. The path to a greener and more sustainable future requires economic transformation, careful planning, and equitable resource distribution, as discussed in the subsequent section.

### *2.2.2 Green growth economy*

Growth economic methods emphasise production and consumption in targeting to enhance Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and prosperity (The Investopedia Team, 2021). However, this growth perspective poses challenges to environmental sustainability and necessitates reassessment in the context of the climate crisis (Mebunii, 2022). As a response, green economics have been proposed as a viable strategy and a substitute course of action for economic models heavily dependent on resources, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO, 2022). This suggests that the pandemic may have prompted a re-evaluation of economic models, possibly due to the global disruption it caused. Green economic structures give prominence to sustainable economic growth whilst integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions through sustainable utilisation of resources and social inclusion (UNEP, 2011). Ultimately, a green or nature-based economy enhances the welfare of humanity, mitigates environmental threats, and nurtures a fairer society (Mabon, 2021). Lorek and Spangenberg (2014) reaffirmed this plan and emphasised that sustainable economies should also limit resource usage, redistributing resources from more affluent individuals to those lacking the basics for their needs. While green growth economics are often commended, it is essential to acknowledge its shortcomings and prioritise comprehensive assessment and cautious implementation (Mabon, 2021). One example that Mabon highlighted is the need to ensure that applying green growth economics does not exacerbate current socio-economic disparities. Such economic approaches must be applied to empower and grant autonomy to the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals (Woroniecki et al.,

2019). In this regard, several agendas and agreements have been founded within a green growth perspective. While this dissertation does not delve into this history, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of the *Paris Agreement*, the *European Green Deal*, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and the SDGs.

The *Paris Agreement*, an internationally binding treaty, establishes long-term targets, including emissions reductions, regular country evaluations every five years, and financial support to help developing nations combat climate change (United Nations Climate Change, 2023). The *European Green Deal* is committed to a zero-carbon status by the year 2050 through sustainable adjustments in various sectors, “including energy, environment, mobility and agriculture” (European Commission, 2022b, p. 6), and the application of environmentally friendly technologies whilst decreasing pollution. This initiative aims to target prevailing and imminent environmental challenges with career guidance at its forefront to support clients in this development (NCGE, 2022b; O’Donoghue, 2020). To address the world’s most crucial challenges, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* offers a strategic path for all UN Member States (United Nations, 2015). This Agenda brings together three aspects: economic, environmental, and social, to pursue sustainability by 2030. This plan incorporates environmental sustainability enhancements whilst also integrating the social aspect of the issue, referring to “sustainable growth and job creation” (European Commission, 2022a, p. 33). According to the Commission, the latter must ensure that equity is exercised so everyone can profit from such development.

Integral to the 2030 Agenda are the 17 SDGs, which act as a catalyst that embodies a collective undertaking (United Nations, 2015) that all 193 UN member countries (Sachs et al., 2023) have pledged to achieve (United Nations, 2015). These goals cover various issues, including education, gender equality, economic growth, and climate action, that aim to “balance social, economic and environmental sustainability” (UNDP, 2023). The objective is to construct a more equitable, prosperous, and environmentally responsible world, thus inspiring a global collaborative effort towards a more sustainable future. The latter is supported by the LinkedIn Economic Graph (2022), which maintained that “policymakers, business leaders and the global workforce have a shared opportunity and responsibility” (p. 36). The SDGs followed the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, which fought against poverty, gender inequity, environmental deterioration, and education enrichment (ILO, 2023a). Consequently, the SDGs strive to improve upon the unmet targets of the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

Resource-efficient developments are vital for a green economic system while generating strong environmental consciousness (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). Education is also an active component of this evolution that can consolidate this awareness, which is discussed next.

### *2.2.3 Education*

Climate change impacts everyone, with a notable impact on the younger generation (ILO, 2022), which is why Rana et al. (2020) insisted on placing significant value on the perspectives of young individuals. The latter grapple with financial instability

and possess limited means and experience when joining the workforce, posing major risks subject to rapid climate change effects (Barford et al., 2021). Maintaining a balance between one's occupation and life quality poses a plausible remedy whereby individuals are empowered to care for themselves better and the surrounding communities (Green European Journal, 2018). This encouragement can help to overcome challenges and transform feelings of despair into direction by focusing on career development (Maggi, 2019). Maggi added that guiding the younger generation towards their goals rejects hopelessness and contributes to a healthier planet through their career and leadership efforts.

Education is crucial for understanding and addressing the climate crisis by fostering awareness and action towards sustainability goals (McKeown, 2006; UNESCO, 2023). To promote sustainability, education needs to be redesigned to prepare learners through personal development and knowledge so they can make informed decisions and take action on local and global issues (UNESCO, 2020). Since the 1960s, environmental education has transformed and progressed, integrating it into policies, initiatives, and programmes (European Commission, 2022b), more commonly known as ESD. On an international basis, UNESCO (2020, 2022) has been working actively towards ESD, notably through its Global Education 2030 Agenda. The organisation recognises the importance of learning to live sustainably and promoting and implementing ESD (UNESCO, 2020). Such initiatives and guidelines are a foundation for any nation to work towards a sustainable future through education. This education strives to transform detrimental, unsustainable lifestyles and motivate students to challenge economic practices and pursue an

enhanced standard of living (Rieckmann, 2018). In other words, ESD addresses environmental matters and social justice with a lifelong perspective vital for SDGs' accomplishment (UNESCO, 2020, 2023).

However, several limitations exist due to the lack of systematic procedures involving “insufficient funding and institutional support” (European Commission, 2022b, p. 7). At a European level, a number of educators promote sustainability driven by a sense of duty and personal values, yet many feel the need for additional training and support to tackle this area (European Commission, 2022b). This need was also expressed by participants in the research by Pirzada et al. (2023), who noted the struggles to incorporate sustainability into the learning process without such knowledge and training. Thus, while green prospects in employment open the doors to a myriad of opportunities, they also present several difficulties, and supporting this education sector can render itself challenging (ILO, 2022). Hence, it is evident that this vast domain requires a systematic approach to provide equitable learning in the green economy. This is of particular importance, given the dynamic nature of careers, in that some of the current jobs we know of today were not around 10-20 years ago (EURES, 2023). Therefore, as industries evolve and new occupations emerge, failing to adapt to these shifts could result in missed opportunities.

Consequently, career education has a significant role in acquainting learners with “social, political, economic, and environmental” (Irving, 2014, p. 8) matters they can reflect upon, whereby career education presents a significant platform for stimulating students to consider environmental concerns (Hooley, 2022b). To effectively support students in a changing job market, career guidance practitioners must stay updated on

evolving job trends and be culturally sensitive in their approach (ILO, 2022; Khalil, 2017).

A comprehensive values-based approach promotes fairness in education and develops more compassionate individuals with a critical mind within an equitable society (Usategui & del Valle, 2007, as cited in Agirreazkuenaga, 2020). In pursuit of this goal, the UN's 2030 Agenda and the SDGs can support educational routes towards sustainability (Agirreazkuenaga, 2020). As mentioned in the previous section, policies like the *European Green Deal* and the *European Skills Agenda* underpin education's pivotal role in endorsing eco-consciousness and enhancing essential expertise (ETF, 2020; European Commission, 2022b; United Nations, 2018). Across a five-year timeframe and through tangible indicators, the *European Skills Agenda* aims to increase participation in education as one of its targets (European Commission, 2020). Through this strategy, the Commission seeks to assist member nations in expanding skills intelligence for an efficient green and digital transition. The Agenda seeks to cultivate fundamental green skills within educational and professional training in preparation for the labour market (European Commission, 2022b).

This section outlined the significance of education in addressing environmental challenges and equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills for a sustainable future. The following sections explore the evolving concept of careers and career guidance while introducing 'green guidance' within educational contexts to guide students with respect to sustainable career choices.

## 2.3 Adapting careers to work and climate shifts

Various scholars have provided their own understanding of careers and their progression, among whom is Hooley (2017), who referred to a career as “the individual’s journey through life, learning and work” (p. 2). McMahon and Knight (CICA, 2023d) have recognised that the concept of work has undoubtedly undergone significant shifts over the past few years. Hooley (2022a) discussed a redefinition of careers that has evolved from the 20<sup>th</sup> century idea of a linear, upward progression in one’s career, an unfolding which has subsequently led to the emergence of a new work ethic. People are exposed to multiple developments within the field of employment (Katsarov et al., 2012), which, as Frayne (n.d., as cited in Beckett, 2018) suggested, “force society to reconsider its views on work” (p. 47). This evolutionary process has reshaped mindsets and outlooks on work, moving away from the traditional concept of “a job for life” (ETF, 2020, p. 6) and prompting reflections on work’s central role in one’s life (Green European Journal, 2018).

### 2.3.1 *Career Guidance amidst changing work values*

In light of this reality of an ever-changing world shaped by globalisation, technology, and automation, empowering individuals with information and tools to handle unforeseen circumstances is crucial (Covey, 2019). The development of environmentally focused jobs unlocks an array of prospects, yet they are accompanied by various challenges, which is where career guidance can contribute as a countermeasure. Career guidance is a comprehensive term encompassing occupational knowledge and advisement designed to support individuals at any stage

of their lives (Sultana & Watts, 2007). It empowers people to explore work and life activities while continuously evaluating their life paths (Hooley, 2022a) through lifelong education, training, and career decisions across diverse settings (OECD, 2004). Thus, career development involves more than providing information on education and jobs and can occur within group and individual settings (Sultana, 2018). In progressive societies, educational and vocational guidance services are vital, as they promote equal access to educational and vocational prospects aligned with the democratic principle of individuals' autonomy in shaping their lives through free choices (European Commission et al., 1994).

Parsons (1909, as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2014) drew attention to three critical components in career choice: self-awareness, understanding the work environment, and the capacity to connect these aspects logically. With the shifting perception of work and career, career guidance is a critical instrument for moving through these shifts (Bors Borbély-Pecze, 2021; Katsarov et al., 2012). In this context, rather than merely providing a compilation of job roles and corresponding remuneration (Maggi, 2019), "career advisors can act as a conduit" (O'Shea et al., 2022, p. 8) and assist service users in approaching the future with an inquisitive mindset coupled with adaptability skills (Covey, 2019). Therefore, "values assessment and clarity should be woven into the career exploration work" (Hansen, 2023). Hansen explained that gauging clients' attributes is integral to career guidance practice when deciding on a professional trajectory; however, this understanding must be coupled with one's value system awareness, which is the foundation for establishing clients' priorities.

When choosing their careers, individuals make decisions as part of their lifestyle (Bors Borbély-Pecze, 2021), and these are not solitary actions but a sequence of perpetual selections “deeply woven into the ongoing fabric of our lives” (Hooley, 2022a). Career choices can be planned but also unintended, where unexpected events or opportunities compel individuals to make changes or decisions related to their careers (Baruch, 2004). One such significant and ongoing challenge is the climate crisis, which has the potential to influence individuals’ values, perceptions of work, and career choices. In this respect, Baruch (2004) assigned a significant role to career guidance, whereby it can support people facing the need to function in an ever-changing labour market with evolving challenges and opportunities stemming from sophisticated jobs requiring new skills.

It is no longer a question of being employed or not. Due to the various work arrangements that have burgeoned, such as part-time work, teleworking, the gig economy, and others, another meaning has been assigned to the concept of holding a job (Green European Journal, 2018). The latter work practice examples may be a choice in pursuit of a work-life balance, amongst other reasons. Nevertheless, work can sometimes impose constraints that limit individuals’ “autonomy and freedom” (p. 3), affecting their overall quality of life (Green European Journal, 2018).

Pertaining to this argument, Beckett (2018) also discussed the pivotal role of work as to how it has “ruled our lives for centuries, and it does so today more than ever” (p. 44). Such a perspective bestows a significant role upon work, for which Beckett presented an unorthodox and revolutionary notion of a world free of jobs known as the “post-work society” (p. 44). Notably, this conveys the idea of a society where

traditional work is less central, and individuals have more time for leisure, personal fulfilment, and other pursuits beyond traditional employment (Beckett, 2018).

Understandably, such a mindset elicits a general change in values on work and life.

Thus, factoring in a post-work vision with this balance search, practitioners cannot overlook the value system in individuals' lives whilst addressing career guidance with clients. Faced with opposing views on the centrality of work (Baruch, 2004; Beckett, 2018; Hooley, 2017, 2022a), the role of career guidance is intensified, particularly in a turbulent time of addressing climate issues from a green career perspective. Given the ongoing transformations, it remains uncertain how career guidance will develop, yet enhancing and refreshing the competencies of career guidance practitioners and services augments the experience of those seeking guidance (Cedefop, 2021; Pirzada et al., 2023). Accordingly, practitioners require awareness of value changes among their clients and understand the implications of such values regarding career selections. In doing so, it is essential to examine the ethical considerations integral to this process, explored in the following section, with particular reference to impartiality in career guidance.

### *2.3.2 Ethical considerations in career guidance for climate change*

Naturally, integrating sustainability values within career guidance raises ethical questions, whereby Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) looked into the consideration of incorporating climate change matters into this practice and whether this should take a directive stance. He asserted that career advisors typically do not aim to dictate individuals' thoughts or life choices, but their primary responsibility centres around

“enabling and empowering” clients to make informed career decisions. Additionally, Sultana (2018) stressed the importance of impartial career information to abide by the ethical standards of career guidance and avoid bias towards specific academic and vocational routes. To address the issue of impartiality, Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) presented a practical approach and recognised it as an integral aspect of career development while drawing attention to the challenge of determining the appropriate actions for practitioners when facing climate change. Hooley (2022b) maintained that impartiality can be accomplished by adopting a structured method that involves “clarifying, exploring, evaluating, and action planning”. In this way, the practitioner can still address the pressing climate crisis without imposing personal agendas upon the client. Thus, through listening and exploring aspirations, career guidance practitioners can act as a compass in identifying strategies in clients’ career planning journey by fostering a growth mindset with a lifelong learning perspective.

Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) affirmed that every job, whether positively or negatively, contributes to a significant environmental footprint, requiring acknowledgement of this impact on work and careers. One proposed approach to address the environmental impact of one’s career is that of green guidance proposed by Peter Plant. This is further explored in the next section, focusing on career guidance and its role in the quest for sustainability through career choices.

## **2.4 The emergence of green career guidance**

Once seen as a potential solution, economic growth is no longer a viable justification (Plant, 2020a, 2020b), and a growing understanding of reckless economic

development and apprehensions about environmental sustainability can be observed (Plant, 2021). Amid the urgent need to address the climate crisis, looking into effective methods of how career guidance practitioners can integrate sustainability principles into career paths is crucial. This can be achieved through accessible, updated, and reliable information. In light of this, this section explores the concept of green guidance as a proactive measure by applying environmental knowledge through ecologically conscious career choices.

Career guidance is vital and has the potential to aid recovery in the face of global workforce challenges (CICA, 2023b; McMahon, 2020). Irving and Malik-Liévano (2019) emphasised the necessity of expanding career discourse that transcends the boundaries of career selection, a narrative situated within an “ecojustice framework” (p. 258). Additionally, Caruana (TedS, 2023) stressed that sustainability integration is crucial for all professions to remain relevant. This corresponds to Packer’s (2019) perspective of a genuinely equitable career guidance service, which is pre-emptive by addressing the climate change quandaries through “communal values” (p. 15).

Heightened awareness of the conflict between economic progress and sustainability issues underscores the obligation of career guidance to mitigate this predicament (Plant, 2020b) through a green guidance approach (Plant, 2021). Initially perceived as a revolutionary notion, if not “utopian” (OeAD, 2021), green guidance within career advisory practices has been a point of discussion for over 20 years, spearheaded by Peter Plant in 1996 (NCGE, 2022a). According to Plant (CICA, 2023b), “it’s not just about choosing a green job...it’s about a new mindset, a new

paradigm”, wherein green guidance takes into account the impact of career choices on the environment (Plant, 2021).

In today’s context, green economies have become indispensable and cannot be disregarded (GAIN, 2017; Rajabi & Warner, 2019), as “‘sustainable development’ is a way of talking about the future shape of the world” (Adams, 2009, p. 379).

Notably, the adoption of the UN’s SDGs has given rise to a renewed emphasis on the importance of green career guidance (NCGE, 2022a). Thus, in the era of the climate change crisis, McMahon (CICA, 2023d) stressed that career guidance practitioners have no option to wait or remain passive, but they must actively engage and adapt to this changing landscape.

#### *2.4.1 Developing a green career guidance approach*

Climate change necessitates career guidance professionals to consider its implications and explore their roles in addressing this challenge (Hašková, 2020; Purchase, 2019; van Brussel & Semeijn, 2020). This can be achieved by exploring sustainable career opportunities (NCGE, 2022b) and applying green guidance, which includes principles like environmental awareness, practitioner training, and incorporating environmental dimensions in client interactions and resources (Plant, 2020a).

In view of the significance of integrating sustainability into career guidance, it becomes evident that an indispensable service such as career guidance must adapt for a more efficient response (ETF, 2020; Plant, 2020b). A recent study highlighted the importance of supporting workers with the appropriate skills to meet the green skills

requirements of the labour market (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022). Then again, such an observation questions whether these shortcomings have emerged because individuals are not being trained or due to a lack of awareness of such career prospects. One must also remember that generating awareness and providing information on climate change and relevant mitigation actions fall short when undertaken in isolation. In this context, Kwauk and Casey (2021) underscored the importance of shifting individual perspectives towards sustainability, a point highlighted earlier in the discussion about values and their impact on one's perspectives and employability.

Westergaard (2012) contended that career professionals should acquire practical expertise to provide the most suitable guidance. Nevertheless, this alone is insufficient, as argued by Hooley (2014). In response to the climate change challenges in the context of career guidance, this highlights the crucial requirement for concrete strategies. This is where Hooley's (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) metaphorical concept of wearing "green glasses" to view the career world through a sustainable lens resonates with the ideas of sustainability within career guidance. In alignment with Hooley, Plant (NCGE, 2022a) drew attention to the significance of forging strong networks between career guidance and the evolving world of work to uphold the "green revolution".

Similarly, Sultana (2008) asserted that cooperation gives rise to "synergy" (p. 26), resulting in numerous valuable prospects for individuals seeking career guidance. Nevertheless, Plant (NCGE, 2022a) maintained that it is essential to approach this sustainably and avoid redundant or repetitive proposals. He recommended policy

measures, such as enacting common legislation and providing sustained funding rather than restricted financial support, which can impede progress.

The green transition should serve as an occasion to safeguard social justice for all workers, and this is where frontrunners, such as governments and businesses, must work towards an equitable transition (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022). Policy and regulation play crucial roles in governance, facilitating the implementation of “green legislation and incentives” to promote sustainable practices and green employment skills (ILO, 2019). In this context, the ILO signalled a good practice taken up by a number of countries whereby national frameworks of occupations have been revised to incorporate new green professions. Such frameworks can provide information on the expertise needed, job tasks, and progression opportunities within the respective career. In the local context, an occupations handbook was created in 2018, which offers information on jobs found in the Maltese labour market dated at 2016 (Jobsplus, 2018). Clearly, due to progressions in both local and global job markets, it is apparent that revising this handbook is necessary. This review should incorporate new roles, especially those related to green employment, and the refinement of skill prerequisites for both existing and emerging occupations in Malta. Furthermore, this can also serve to establish educational and training programmes that match such careers. This method links to green career guidance, which can facilitate reference to a standardised job classification for local practitioners to utilise with their clients.

Unavoidably, this sustainability pursuit through career choices generates challenges delved into in the upcoming section, together with approaches to address them effectively.

#### *2.4.2 Challenges for green guidance towards a just green transition*

Career guidance, as a helping profession, aims to assist service users effectively, which can be challenging in the contemporary neoliberal era with its emphasis on “competitive and possessive individualism” (Hooley & Sultana, 2016, p. 4), whereby the primary objective is to guide individuals in their career choices for economic growth. However, this approach may overlook the ongoing ecological challenges that affect social justice (Irving, 2014). Plant (2021) linked these challenges to the concept of green guidance and concerns related to the environment, emphasising the interconnectedness of social justice and career guidance.

Furthermore, with the evolution of skills adjusting to the green economy, the importance of an equitable transition becomes evident in the necessity for decent employment opportunities (ILO, 2019). Jobs will not merely be terminated or introduced to the career world but reconceptualised through credential requirements (GAIN, 2017). However, gaining these certifications does not necessarily ensure job placement, as uncertainties remain regarding whether current qualifications, which claim to prepare for specific roles, accurately correspond to job demands (ILO, 2019). Accordingly, it is imperative to integrate a social justice perspective within career guidance to address the gaps related to the awareness of and responses to environmental challenges. In a world of increasing work relocation opportunities, one cannot ignore the importance of equipping prospective employees to function in varied labour markets worldwide should opportunities arise. In consequence, when one designs career guidance practices and resources, a wide lens of awareness is essential to cater to clients’ different needs.

“Skills gaps and shortages are almost inevitable whenever a new product or service appears, and the green economy is not an exception” (ILO, 2019, p. 119). Despite numerous efforts and initiatives to implement greener work practices, skills gaps and shortages have intensified, which, in turn, challenge the green transition advancement (ILO, 2019). Thus, as the compelling requirement for skilled workers increases due to the changing world of work amidst environmental challenges, integral high-standard training and education systems are vital (United Nations, 2018). An equitable green progression is critical with skills growth as its foundation; hence, “a coordinated policy approach” (ILO, 2019, p. 5) is essential. Regardless of these identified skills gaps, several means can help alleviate these circumstances, specifically through skills assessments and anticipation exercises (ILO, 2023b; OECD, 2016). The latter instruments incorporate methods to produce information on the labour market’s present and future proficiencies and accessible skill sets (OECD, 2016) to develop strategies for future contexts created from information substantiated by evidence (Wilson, 2012, as cited in OECD, 2016).

### *2.4.3 Adapting career guidance for a sustainable and evolving future*

Despite the challenges in the current economy, embracing sustainability remains a noble pursuit for a more meaningful existence in a better world (Irving, 2014). This perspective highlights the significance of taking care of the environment and being socially responsible for the benefit of the current and future generations through global collective efforts. Green guidance challenges established career theories, prompting practitioners to rethink their practices, even questioning the traditional client-centred approach, where individual careers recede, and shared objectives,

including social justice, take precedence (Plant, 2015). These theories range from the individualistic work ethic, Holland's person-environment fit, Gottfredson's circumscription and compromise applications in career choices, to Savickas' life-design approach, among others (OeAD, 2021). In other words, green guidance principles challenge the individualistic trend portrayed through such theoretical perspectives, which encourages career guidance to pursue collective goals by adopting a collaborative approach within the world of careers. One theory that addresses the need for sustainable career choices is Hansen's (2011) Integrative Life Planning theory, which stresses that career guidance practitioners should promote holistic considerations concerning career choices. With respect to the latter, she identified six critical life tasks, among which is that of "finding work that needs doing and that provides economic self-sufficiency in changing global contexts" (Hansen & Suddarth, 2008, p. 6). Similarly, Irving (2014) assigns responsibility to career practitioners to address this issue by not acting as "cogs in the neoliberal economic wheel" (p. 7). Instead, he commends the cultivation of reflection among clients regarding career selections and their social and environmental influence.

This process can be facilitated through education and the teaching of critical thinking whilst delving into sustainable futures incorporating social justice (Irving, 2014). In this regard, the ILO (2015) constructed a set of fundamental principles that ensure an equitable shift towards environmentally sustainable economies in a contextual manner applicable to the respective countries. These guidelines focus on interactive communication among stakeholders to work towards rights at the workplace, including the gender component. Additionally, this framework recommends a solid

strategy to forecast potential adverse consequences on employment and provide sustainable resolutions, such as skills development.

Considering this, career guidance practitioners must stay informed about labour market projections to adapt services to changing demands and essential skills, enhancing resilience in a constantly evolving world. Ongoing professional development and networking with stakeholders like policymakers and employers can support this goal. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the potentiality of unexpected scenarios, such as COVID-19, which impacted the labour market through the loss of jobs and job skill changes, emphasising the need for proactive strategies and actions (ILO, 2022). However, from this profoundly distressing experience, valuable lessons were derived. According to the LinkedIn Economic Graph (2022), the pandemic demonstrated that “green talent can be more resilient than non-green talent” (p. 19), which is a significant outcome in the setting of climate crisis action. This underscores the critical role of integrating green practices and pertinent employability skills for a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future, as is further explored in the subsequent section.

#### *2.4.4 Essential skills in an evolving economy*

There is no mutually acceptable classification of the specific capabilities needed for the green transition (Bianchi, 2020, as cited in European Commission, 2022b).

Cedefop (2012) characterised green skills as “the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a society which reduces the impact of human activity on the environment” (p. 20). This description is somewhat generic;

however, identifying existing skills gaps pertaining to green careers is not straightforward as these are in abundance (ILO, 2019). The lack of well-defined features adds an additional challenge for career advisors to address green skills when they are ill-equipped due to such a dearth of information.

Nevertheless, some green competencies are required across various careers (ILO, 2019), and these could serve as a foundation or a starting point for clients interested in venturing into green careers. Kwauk and Casey (2021) introduced a *Green Skills Framework* whereby one category distinguishes generic competencies as “green life skills”, essential across different sectors needed to adapt to the shift towards environmental sustainability. As expected, learning these skills would necessitate supplementary education and training to gain new profession-specific skills required for the green transition (European Commission, 2022b). In connection with this, the *European Skills Agenda* categorises skills needed for the green transition in addition to the establishment of a “European competence framework on sustainability” (European Commission, 2022b, p. 77). This initiative is essential for the career guidance line of work as it offers a structure that can be put into effect whilst guiding clients towards the needed skills for green jobs.

Conversely, there is increasing concern that, to date, the path in the direction of the green transition lacks adequate green expertise in terms of human capital, which is, in turn, prolonging the advancement on the path to green economies (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022). The fact “that the demand for green talent and green skills is outpacing supply” (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022, p. 16) reiterates the crucial

role that career guidance can offer within a green career realm in creating awareness of this evolving career field, its requirements, and prospects.

When considering the list of the essential competencies necessary for green employment outlined by the ILO (2019), one can gain insights into areas to explore in career guidance. These skills incorporate environmental consciousness, business expertise, critical thinking, and networking (ILO, 2019). For instance, sustainable fashion is a burgeoning industry incorporating green skills (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022). As a result, career guidance practitioners gain value from this information, enabling them to offer up-to-date guidance on current career trends, especially regarding deceptive environmental marketing. The latter, known as ‘greenwashing’, pertains to companies and organisations making negligible and ineffective claims about addressing the climate crisis (Coghlan, 2011), primarily to deflect criticism.

#### *2.4.5 Greenwashing*

As the world becomes more conscious of humanity’s environmental impact, companies experience substantial pressure to align with stakeholder expectations, and they might be inclined to overstate, deceive, or enhance their promotion of products and practices regarding their environmental initiatives (Kim et al., 2017). The proliferation of sustainable declarations by numerous companies can blur the line between green advertising and greenwashing (Yildirim, 2023). Worthy of consideration, though, are Yildirim’s (2023) reservations on whether greenwashing practices represent a quick evasion of sustainability or a gradual progression towards

it, emphasising the fine line between the two. This assertion calls attention to deeper investigations beyond the scope of this dissertation, but as growing attention to greenwashing intensifies, Santos et al. (2023) advocated for further research into this phenomenon to identify “trends, gaps, and opportunities” (p. 1). This raises questions about the need for critical thinking and media literacy to empower individuals to discern genuine sustainability efforts from mere marketing strategies.

#### *2.4.6 Promoting equity and analytical awareness in green career guidance*

Considering the previous observations, it is vital to find ways to mitigate obstacles that career guidance practitioners may encounter when promoting sustainable careers. It is also valuable to examine Hooley’s (2022a) exploration of career guidance’s potential impact on equity by questioning whose interests it serves and considering actionable changes. Expanding on this notion, he highlighted the significance of social justice in career guidance through the identification of five signposts that aid in achieving socially just career guidance. These include cultivating analytical awareness, identifying discrimination, probing standard practices, fostering teamwork, and being involved in different societal levels to affect change (Hooley, 2021, 2022a, 2022b).

These five pointers can be applied to green career guidance to facilitate access to related opportunities within green occupations (Hooley, 2022a). With reference to one of the proposed signposts, that of questioning the norm (Hooley, 2022a), various sources (European Commission, 2022b; ILO, 2018, 2019; Kwauk & Casey, 2021; United Nations, 2018) have classified critical and analytical thinking as valuable

employability skills for the green transition. In applying this signpost, the development of instrumental transversal skills can be honed. Considering this, the emergence of green guidance itself applied this indicator in challenging traditional methods by promoting the integration of environmental and social factors into career selection.

This section has shown how green guidance services can help individuals access sustainable career options, enabling them to pursue fulfilling aspirations while contributing to climate crisis mitigation. Green guidance promotes values aligned with environmental sustainability and fosters the development of green skills, especially in educational settings, as discussed in the upcoming section.

## **2.5 Green career guidance in educational settings**

Within the knowledge-driven economy (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020), achieving success requires more than mere rote learning (Leicht et al., 2018), whereby a number of attributes are crucial for secondary education (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). Taking the role of “agents of change” (Leicht et al., 2018, p. 32), vital components of education would require the ability to critically assess information and communicate effectively, together with environmental knowledge and competencies (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). Accordingly, fostering environmental appreciation that instils the requisite approach and knowledge for a sustainable life is crucial, and introducing green competencies to students early is essential (Kamis et al., 2017). Such students would be adept at assessing global matters, empathising, understanding diverse perspectives, and contributing towards sustainable

development through proactive efforts (OECD, 2020). Insufficient environmental awareness hinders the development of a green mindset in youth, leading to environmentally harmful actions among those unaware of its importance (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020).

Thus, “education is the best platform to teach generic green skills to the students” (p. 161), and developing these skills is crucial for competent, eco-conscious students and environmental equilibrium (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). Incorporating this concept within career guidance in educational contexts, known as ‘green guidance’, can motivate students to consider their values, environmental impact, and sustainability when making academic and vocational decisions. Green career guidance allows students to explore a broad range of job roles and alternative career paths, expanding their prospects and equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for their careers. However, this needs to be supported by a conducive school environment, and the European Commission (2022b) outlined a number of “enabling factors” (p. 43) in this regard. These entail strategic planning, flexibility, proactivity, and student participation. More importantly, it is crucial to incorporate a forward-looking approach to make sure that education is not solely *about* sustainability but *for* sustainability (European Commission, 2022b).

Conversely, Gonon (CICA, 2023c) questions the teachability of sustainability values and suggests that adaptation is not straightforward, given the limitations of small-scale or individual green initiatives. He emphasises the significance of large-scale coordinated efforts for sustainable change, highlighting the need for a collective approach. Nevertheless, cultivating values on a personal level is essential, as it serves

as the foundation for collective actions. The climate crisis and the need to counteract its impact through work choices necessitate a long-term approach to such decisions. This is where the significance of lifelong learning becomes evident, as it can be integrated to navigate the progressive nature of job transformations in the green transition. By embedding a green lens into the service, career guidance practitioners can help cultivate a sustainable perspective among clients, building a solid foundation for current and upcoming jobs.

### *2.5.1 The Maltese scenario*

Acknowledging the fact that job variations owing to the green transition involve successive changes and/or additions in the respective sector and country (ILO, 2019), the need for a contextualised approach is evident. In a small state, job prospects may be relatively scarce within a constrained labour market, affecting career choices (Sultana, 2006). Thus, this situation is particularly relevant within a small state like Malta, which is the context focus of this dissertation. Maltese career guidance, especially in the context of green guidance, must prioritise skill development, global opportunities, continuous learning, and adaptability due to its unique challenges as a small state with limited job prospects. This section delves into the local approach to career guidance in the context of the green transition, with particular reference to the education sector.

In the field of career guidance, awareness of “socio-cultural factors” (Sultana, 2017a, p. 37) is essential, as it allows us to understand how “human-environment interactions are culture-bound” (Tam & Milfont, 2020, p. 16). Such an understanding

can shed light on how individuals formulate their decisions within specific cultural settings when considering career guidance as “a situated social practice” (Sultana, 2017a, p. 430). This concept calls attention to the fact that human behaviours and practices are not universal, meaning they cannot be fully understood or explained without considering the social and cultural factors surrounding them. Contexts impact the reception of green transition accordingly. As a result, although similar targets are present in different countries, such as the need to be more sustainable, a one-size-fits-all is futile, as “each country is going through a unique journey that reflects their current workforce and human capital situation” (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022, p. 47). This is why sustainability agendas must be compatible with the respective cultures in which they are implemented, primarily by actively involving the local population, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives (Khalil, 2017).

The green transition has been acclaimed for providing ample employment opportunities while being ecologically conscious (ILO, 2019, 2022; OECD, 2020; Purchase, 2019; Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). For instance, Malta is among the countries where green talent in finance has expanded by 20% in 2023; however, this shift comes with noteworthy disparities relating to age, gender, and education (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022, 2023). While the global age gap is improving with more young people accessing the green employment sector, female figures have remained persistently low since 2015. The LinkedIn Economic Graph (2022) referred to it as the “green gender gap” (p. 32), and notably, Malta is one of the top 25 countries working at closing this gap. Nevertheless, individuals possessing lower

than tertiary education experienced reduced access to green jobs, despite Malta's 13% growth in post-secondary educated workers within the green talent pool between 2015 and 2021 (LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2022).

One might question the significance and implications of these local figures and developments in career guidance practices. Primarily, this sheds light on the necessity of customised local approaches to ensure commitment to the evolving green transition, taking into consideration the distinct aspects of Malta's labour force. Moreover, sectoral opportunities within the finance arena within a greener economy are essential to tap into. Within this context, local career guidance practitioners need to comprehend the transitioning requirements in the thriving finance sector and other prospective ones. This would be beneficial when working with clients so they can be supported in integrating their ambitions and expertise within unfolding work prospects.

Consequently, organisations such as the EU are instrumental in addressing priorities and targets accordingly (Mifsud, 2010) through customised progress reports and action points for each member state, including Malta. As part of the EU, Malta has been working on its green transition, yet its "green economy is still limited in its development" (p. 33), and a number of shortcomings still need to be addressed in order to achieve the UN *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's* objectives (European Commission, 2022a). Such deficiencies include inadequate air quality, overdevelopment through construction, unsatisfactory waste management, and further education to foster environmental awareness to promote participation in sustainable initiatives (ERA, 2020). In light of international efforts to promote

sustainability and address environmental challenges, it is essential to consider the local environmental regulatory frameworks to understand how they correspond and contribute to these global initiatives.

### *2.5.2 Local environmental regulatory frameworks*

This literature review explores the critical issue of climate change and the various strategies implemented to protect the natural environment and promote sustainable economic growth through fairness and equity. Focusing on Malta, as this dissertation centres on the local context, it is essential to understand how this small nation strives to safeguard its unique environment while fostering sustainable development. Local environmental policies play a crucial role in advancing this goal and addressing environmental challenges that affect the Maltese community. This section aims to provide an overview of these pertinent environmental policies to provide context for a more informed discussion, particularly within the education sector context.

The Environment & Resources Authority (ERA) is Malta's primary regulator, ensuring environmental laws and policies are upheld for a "sustainable quality of life" (ERA, 2022). The Authority collaborates with stakeholders, sets targets, gathers data, monitors impacts, and incorporates environmental aspects into development management. Its involvement with stakeholders can be observed through its organised career events with educational institutions such as the University of Malta and MCAST through traineeships and summer placements, in addition to several workshops and varied courses concerning the environment (ERA, 2023). ERA also networks with the EU on environmental issues, given the context of Malta's

membership in the EU and the EU's influence on environmental policies and regulations within its member states. Thus, apart from coordination with the Maltese Government, ERA is also engaged in various European and international networks. One notable contribution is ERA's involvement in fulfilling the *EU Action Plan: Towards a Zero Pollution Ambition for Air, Water and Soil* (ERA, 2023). In 2021, ERA, in collaboration with Education Officers (EOs), developed *MonstAir*, an educational app for primary school children. It teaches them about air pollution sources, health effects, and how to reduce their contribution through interactive games, reflecting ERA's commitment to environmental education (ERA, 2021). Such undertakings are executed in accordance with the Environment Protection Act.

Malta enacted the Environment Protection Act (2019) as a legal framework, which is pivotal for national environmental protection and management and authorises ERA to regulate and enforce environmental policies safeguarding Malta's natural resources and fostering sustainability. Under this Act, the Authority is at the helm of developing and delivering environmental education, training, and awareness programmes independently or in partnership with others (Environment Protection Act, 2019). Additionally, it mandates that it is "the duty of every person and entity... to protect the environment and to assist in the taking of preventive and remedial measures to protect the environment and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner" (Environment Protection Act, 2019, p. 4).

The *National Strategy for the Environment 2050*, under the Environment Protection Act, is Malta's overarching environmental policy, which tackles issues such as "air quality, waste management, biodiversity" (p. 30) and establishes plans to facilitate

and empower the necessary changes to support the sustainability shift (ERA, 2023). Additionally, the *National Strategy for the Environment 2050* was collaboratively produced with input from diverse stakeholders, including representatives from policymaking, the academic sphere, the corporate sector, and the non-profit sector (Calleja, 2022). This strategy guides *Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050*, which works in parallel with the UN *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda* and the established SDGs. It acknowledges the significance of lifelong, solid educational and training methods that respond to developing industry requirements through skill development by 2050 (Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, 2018). The focus of this Vision is that by 2050, enhanced employment opportunities featuring improved wages, protection, and opportunities will be generated while fostering workers' adaptability in response to evolving job structures (Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, 2018).

Nevertheless, despite evident progress in certain areas, such as waste management through recycling procedures and educational programmes, a number of challenges are highlighted. These include waste reduction and countering the difficulties that arise from developing realities in the labour market (Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, 2018). Thus, even though environmental educational programmes and initiatives are in place to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices, one would need to examine evidence of implementation and evaluation of such established policies and measures.

This section offered a glimpse of Malta's local environmental legislation and policies, which indicate that regulatory frameworks are in place to address environmental challenges. However, effective environmental stewardship extends beyond laws and regulations alone. The following section delves into Malta's educational and career guidance programmes regarding education and vocational preparation for employment in the journey towards a sustainable future.

### *2.5.3 Environmental education in Maltese secondary schools*

Transitioning from environmental education to all-inclusive sustainability education necessitates mindset changes and inclusive action (Agirreazkuenaga, 2019).

Similarly, Mifsud (TedS, 2023) emphasised the importance of creating environmental awareness and for individuals to address climate change issues and bring about tangible changes. Apart from established policies, local efforts towards environmental sustainability are felt through a number of systems, such as education. In 2010, Mifsud highlighted that despite environmental education in Malta dating back to the 1960s, raising awareness was challenging. The suppression of creativity within the education ideology and the constraints imposed by extensive curriculum requirements were contributing factors. Additionally, the materials used then were not locally prepared, posing challenges to their adaptability to the Maltese context (Mifsud, 2010). Since then, significant progress has occurred.

In fact, secondary schools in Malta incorporate elements of environmental preservation and sustainable practices across various subjects, such as Agribusiness (Government of Malta, 2022b). With reference to environmental aspects integration

within school subjects, for this dissertation, particular emphasis will be placed on Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD). This is because this subject is of particular relevance as it encompasses two crucial components: environmental awareness and career education, both of which correlate with the dissertation's focus and objectives.

Additionally, the Centre for Environmental Education and Research (CEER) at the University of Malta concentrates on ESD, among other areas (CEER, 2021). A commonly known educational programme across various Maltese schools is the *EkoSkola* programme initiated by CEER. This programme engages students in activities and initiatives focused on sustainability and environmental conservation. It also encourages schools to adopt eco-friendly practices, reduce their environmental impact, and raise awareness about environmental issues among students. The beneficial outcomes of *EkoSkola* set in motion the inclusion of ESD as a cross-curricular theme in the *National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF)* (CEER, 2021). Moreover, students following this programme have the opportunity to voice their ideas within a parliamentary context (European Commission, 2022b), which gives them a chance to practise a significant skill within the green transition, that of communication.

This engagement in environmental preservation extends to an international level, where Malta's Year 11 students participating in PISA surveys provide vital insights into the local education system, aiding global benchmarking and evidence-based policymaking. Noticeably, in PISA 2018, Maltese students exhibited a high level of awareness of global issues, surpassing OECD averages, and a solid commitment to

“collective well-being and sustainable development” (p. 18), with a significant majority following global events on social media (OECD, 2020).

#### *2.5.4 Integrating environmental awareness into career preparation*

Despite positive local indicators, Mifsud (TedS, 2023) highlighted an overarching local gap pertaining to action towards climate issues through tangible changes. He stressed the need to move beyond awareness and take proactive steps to address climate change challenges. Educational programmes like PSCD, ESD, and *EkoSkola* focus on imparting knowledge and fostering sustainable attitudes and practices in everyday life. Nevertheless, links between environmental sustainability and career choices are lacking. For instance, PSCD addresses careers and sustainable green practices as individual matters (Government of Malta, 2022a). However, in pursuit of greening career choices, awareness and action must be combined within the career preparation and choice process. Such an objective can be made possible through adequate career guidance within an educational setting, such as the secondary school. This is because, at this stage of their education, students have the opportunity to link selected specialised subjects with their future work aspirations. This is where career guidance can contribute and bring together sustainability knowledge and awareness among students to make better-informed career choices that reflect today’s realities.

Furthermore, career guidance practitioners are dutybound to remain updated with the “future skills needs” (McKenzie, 2020, p. 4). In view of this, the absence of information on local green guidance practices presents a significant challenge in bridging this crucial gap. This is because it has implications for guiding individuals

to access the area of green careers (ILO, 2022). Therefore, even though students are exposed to the importance of sustainable environmental practices, they need to be linked with career knowledge and planning (ILO, 2022). Considering this lacuna, it is essential to consider several local relevant documents that guide career guidance and education in Maltese schools.

#### *2.5.5 Local educational frameworks for career guidance and education*

Among these documents, the following will be considered for the purpose of this dissertation: the existing *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007), *A National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF)* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) and the more recent *Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools* (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020). Understanding the mentioned policy and frameworks is essential to comprehending the guiding principles of local career guidance and education and how sustainability concepts are integrated within them or not. When analysing the above-mentioned policy and frameworks, commonalities between the three documents were found. On a broad understanding, their objectives focus on nurturing lifelong learners with critical thinking skills, preparing students for the world of work, and fostering engaged citizens who promote social justice.

Despite these guiding documents, specific materials and resources for green career guidance are lacking locally. This dissertation has highlighted the need for such tools, and to address this gap, a manual for local career guidance practitioners within secondary schools was created.

Selected learning outcomes and objectives from the mentioned documents (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007; Gravina & Camilleri, 2020; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) formed the basis for a manual aimed at integrating green career guidance in local secondary schools as a tool to equip practitioners in this field.

Although no universal framework or model can be applied universally to all educational settings worldwide, it is worth mentioning that diverse education initiatives are being implemented in different countries. These can serve as valuable references when developing future frameworks and tools. Various nations have taken it upon themselves to develop blueprints, manuals, resources, and training on sustainability within the educational field. For this dissertation, Ireland was selected as a focus for initiatives that it undertakes to tackle climate change and sustainability with a career selection aspect embedded.

## **2.6 Ireland: Empowering students for sustainable careers**

Ireland is one of the leading countries in implementing green guidance goals within educational career guidance frameworks to promote sustainability, environmental awareness, and green career pathways. Ireland and its ESD are viewed as encouraging progress (NCGE, 2022a), whereby Plant refers to the Irish initiatives as “foundation blocks throughout the educational systems including lifelong guidance”. This correlates with the European Commission’s understanding that “learning for environmental sustainability can and should therefore be lifelong” (European Commission, 2022b, p. 37).

Within the Irish educational system, climate action and sustainable development are interwoven across subjects (NCCA, 2022). The primary objective of these initiatives is to provide students with the essential knowledge, expertise, and resources necessary for making well-informed choices regarding environmentally sustainable career opportunities. Since this dissertation focuses on the secondary level cohort, the *Senior Cycle Framework* drawn by the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is considered (NCCA, 2018). The senior cycle aims to promote engaged learning in sustainable lifestyles for the benefit of individuals and society, as outlined by NCCA (2018). Incidentally, a new Leaving Certificate subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development in select secondary schools will be introduced in 2024 (Department of Education, 2022; Government of Ireland, 2022). The objective is to empower students for upcoming global challenges, including “sustainability, climate change, technology, social and economic trends, and public health” (CARO, 2022). The new certification demonstrates a commitment to educating students about vital climate and sustainability topics, enriching the curriculum, and fostering career opportunities in the related field.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This comprehensive literature review explored the intersection of climate change, sustainability, and the pivotal role of career guidance within this evolving setting. Various aspects were considered, including shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration, exploring varied perceptions and attitudes to these phenomena, and the influence of neoliberalism. Several responses to mitigate this reality were also explored, including growth and degrowth economies and the impact of education towards sustainable values and lifestyles and career selections owing to the support of ethical career guidance through green guidance. Challenging dimensions of green guidance were also delved into, prompting emphasis on social justice and equity. Focusing on Malta, environmental policies, legislation, and educational efforts to address climate change and sustainability within educational settings in cooperation with career guidance were also presented. This review served as a foundation for further research and action in the dynamic field of green career guidance and its fundamental role in shaping a sustainable future. It also set the groundwork for developing the interview guide as part of this dissertation's data collection, the analysis and discussion of the findings, and, ultimately, the development of a manual for local career guidance practitioners within secondary school institutions. The following chapter presents the methodology of this dissertation.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter serves as a comprehensive guide to the methodology employed in this dissertation. It begins by explaining the rationale behind the research method and research questions. It then covers the selected approach for data collection, data analysis, participant selection, research instrument, and ethical considerations while acknowledging the strengths and limitations inherent in this study. The principal objective of this research was to explore sustainability perceptions and practices among a specific group of individuals employed at local secondary schools with career guidance duties. Additionally, it aimed to identify the factors that either facilitate or hinder the integration of environmentally conscious principles into their practices.

#### **3.1 Epistemological orientation and research questions**

Selected research methodologies fulfil varied purposes (Gruba & Zobel, 2017) and thus should be congruent with the research objectives and questions they seek to address (Allingham & Hay, 2018; Blair, 2016). Accordingly, it is crucial to consider the fundamental epistemological stance underpinning the research process.

Epistemology refers to the attainment of knowledge, its investigation, and the relationship dynamics between the researcher and the participant (Ponterotto, 2005).

In the realm of social sciences, a fundamental inquiry lies in whether natural science concepts should be applied to examine social aspects of the world (Bryman, 2016).

Within the social sciences, there are a number of epistemological stances, including positivism and interpretivism, outlined in the next section.

### *3.1.1 Methodological contrasts in positivism and interpretivism*

Positivism is one epistemological stance that suggests applying natural science techniques to analyse the social domain by forming testable hypotheses and acquiring knowledge through factual data collection (Bryman, 2016). Positivism, shaped by the method of formulating and testing hypotheses, revolves around validating said hypotheses. The primary objective of positivistic inquiry is to explain phenomena, ultimately aspiring towards predictability and control (Ponterotto, 2005).

Alternatively, interpretative analysis is based on the idea that it is essential to adopt a strategy that acknowledges the distinctions between individuals and the subjects studied in natural sciences (Bryman, 2016). It focuses on hidden meanings that require unveiling through profound reflection (Schwandt, 2000 and Sciarra, 1999, as cited in Ponterotto, 2005). Consequently, interpretivism requires social scientists to understand the subjective significance of social actions (Bryman, 2016) and highlights the importance of qualitative data in knowledge acquisition (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994, as cited in Chowdhury, 2014). It goes beyond revealing how social group members interpret their world; it aims to contextualise these interpretations within a social scientific framework (Bryman, 2016).

Therefore, the primary difference between interpretivism and positivism is their focus, whereby the former prioritises understanding and interpreting the subjective meanings, perspectives, and experiences of individuals or social groups through qualitative accounts and detailed descriptions. In contrast, positivism relies on quantitative data as its foundation (Bernardino, 2023). Understandably, these two

contrasting approaches offer distinct research benefits while also posing methodological limitations and challenges. This reality calls for critical evaluation (Bernardino, 2023) so that the most appropriate method is applied to the respective research to yield reliable findings. Due to the subjective nature of meaning within an interpretivist epistemology, interpretive research findings may be unique to a specific context, which reduces the certainty of generalisation when compared to the statistical methods of positivism (Kaliyamurthi, 2021). This is particularly evident when interpretative research leads to discovering unexpected findings (Bryman, 2016), in addition to interpretivism being more time-consuming than positivism (Kaliyamurthi, 2021). On the other hand, a positivist limitation would be the difficulty in comprehensively identifying all contributing factors to a phenomenon and the constraints of statistical analyses in explaining behaviour or understanding human intention (Schroeder, 2005, as cited in Bernardino, 2023).

After thoroughly considering both positivist and interpretivist approaches, it became evident that an interpretive approach was the most suitable choice for my research. This process allowed for a meaningful exploration of a local under-researched area, whereby the objective was to understand how the selected informants approached green career guidance through subjective experiences and interpretations. I carefully planned my research timeline to accommodate data collection, interpretations, and analysis to counter the time-consuming factor accompanying an interpretative method. Despite its limitations, this approach allowed for a meaningful exploration of an under-researched area in the local context. By using interpretivism, I could deeply analyse participants' contributions and their relevance to the research

questions, shedding light on the current local state of the field of career guidance in the context of sustainability.

### *3.1.2 Research questions*

Qualitative methodology is chosen for its capacity to provide exhaustive insights into the chosen subject matter, capturing the nuances of the “real world” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 10). This research approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013), is ideal for classifying “themes and patterns of meaning...based on participants’ standpoint” (p. 175), allowing us to explore and understand how individuals experience and make sense of the world (Warren, 2020).

Founded on an interpretivist epistemology, this research applied a qualitative methodology to explore the area of green guidance among individuals with career guidance responsibilities within Maltese government secondary schools. In this respect, a thematic analysis procedure was applied for this study to understand the participants’ experiences in the selected research area. The aim was to delve into the role of career guidance in the context of environmental sustainability by identifying current practices, as well as the benefits and challenges associated with this approach. To date, there has been no local research conducted on this subject. Accordingly, I aimed to fill this void with an exploratory study, considering the absence of research on green career guidance practices in the local secondary school sector. I chose a qualitative tradition to carry out this research to attain a deep understanding of how the subject of green guidance within a career development setting is addressed through the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers employed at such schools. In line with this aim and laying the groundwork for a thematic analysis of the interview data, a set of research questions was constructed as follows:

Main research question:

- What is the role of career guidance in relation to green guidance within Maltese government secondary schools?

Supplementary research questions:

- How do career guidance practitioners in Maltese government secondary schools address the area of green guidance?
- What benefits do career guidance practitioners in Maltese government secondary schools experience when incorporating green guidance principles into their practice?
- What challenges do career guidance practitioners in Maltese government secondary schools encounter when integrating green guidance principles into their practice?

## **3.2 Sample**

The study aimed to target a specific population, which involved individuals working in local secondary schools with career guidance included in their responsibilities. To accomplish this, within the parameters of a qualitative research study, a sample of 10 participants was chosen from different secondary schools in Malta. The participants

were recruited using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The sample comprised individuals working in secondary schools, some of whom also provided services at the primary school level within their colleges. The 10 participants, consisting of two males and eight females, possessed over a decade of experience in various career guidance roles. These included career advisors responsible for one-on-one and group sessions, guidance, and PSCD teachers with expertise in both areas and participants primarily focused on PSCD activities. Each participant was given a pseudonym, as presented in the table below.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Alexia	Career advisor	Female
Pamela	PSCD teacher	Female
Vivianne	Guidance and PSCD teacher	Female
Gail	Career advisor	Female
Whitney	Career advisor	Female
Doreen	Guidance and PSCD teacher	Female
Miriam	PSCD teacher	Female
Oliver	Career advisor	Male
Max	Career advisor	Male
Nathalie	PSCD teacher	Female

In qualitative research, sampling methods like purposive sampling are essential. They help researchers collect data that “generate insight and in-depth understanding” (Patton, 2002, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 56). Purposive sampling is used to select data sources that can offer valuable insights for the research, assuming that these individuals can provide such information (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Unlike random selection, this method strategically selects participants who are relevant to the research (Bryman, 2016).

While purposive sampling does not allow for generalisability, it ensures diversity among selected participants, leading to richer data (Bryman, 2016). In this

dissertation, purposive sampling was applied to the selected sample of individuals involved in career guidance (career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers) in state secondary schools in Malta. These participants were chosen based on their variety of roles and expertise levels since they are the primary individuals in the secondary education sector responsible for career guidance. Hence, this deliberate choice aimed to provide reliable insights based on their specialised knowledge in the field, focusing on informants who are experts in the research subject.

For this research study, the participants' recruitment process included a request to conduct research through the Ministry for Education and Employment to attain ethical approval (MFED, 2019). Authorisation to conduct research was obtained from both the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) (L-Università ta' Malta, 2022) and the Ministry for Education and Employment Research Ethics Committee (MREC) (Government of Malta, 2016). Following this approval, the respective Education Officers (EOs) of Career Guidance and PSCD responsible for state schools were formally requested to disseminate a research participation invitation to secondary school career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers.

The interested participants were provided with a research participation information letter (see Appendix 2) explaining the study's purpose and their contribution to it. Additionally, information on data collection, storage, and analysis, in addition to data deletion after its use, was explained in this letter. Participating practitioners were also given a consent form (see Appendix 3) to indicate their voluntary willingness to participate in the research. Thomas (2021) stressed the importance of providing the

possibility for participants to opt out of the research. In line with this, the consent form also included the option for participants to withdraw at any time.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Research data collection methods incorporate both advantages and disadvantages in their application, and to select the most appropriate one, it is necessary to consider the data type that can be drawn and its use for the conducted study (Blair, 2016). One such method is the semi-structured interview, which allows the researcher to compile comprehensive knowledge on the chosen research subject (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and also has the flexibility advantage of using questions in the order that best serves the respective interview session (Bryman, 2016). Warren (2001) endorsed this approach, likening it to a “guided conversation” (p. 85) where the interviewer attentively listens to discern the underlying meanings of the information being transmitted. Taking this into consideration, semi-structured interviews served as the chosen data collection method for this dissertation due to their flexibility in using guided inquiries and the ability to seek clarification on key aspects. Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that such a method is time-consuming, including the interview sessions, transcription, data organisation, and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Despite this limitation, the use of qualitative interviews allows for deeper exploration, enabling participants to share a greater volume of information, resulting in more comprehensive data (Bryman, 2016).

Factoring in the pros and cons mentioned above, the semi-structured interview was deemed the most appropriate instrument for this dissertation’s purpose, where 10

semi-structured interviews with consenting participants were conducted to answer the set research questions. Compared to face-to-face interviews, it is essential to note virtual interviews' advantages and disadvantages. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), online interviews may pose some disadvantages, such as information or data loss due to a lack of visual cues. Then again, instead of viewing virtual interviews as inferior substitutes for in-person ones, Braun and Clarke (2013) saw them as complementary tools, providing convenience for both the researcher and interviewees. In view of this and aiming to prioritise participants' convenience and availability, for this dissertation, the interviews were held online using the Zoom platform, as they all opted for the virtual option to be able to fit them into their schedules.

The interview guide was developed based on a thorough literature review presented in the previous chapter. This approach ensured comprehensive coverage of relevant topics in the field of green career guidance and addressed the research questions through guided queries and clarification of relevant details by exploring various aspects of the topic in the study. This included participants' backgrounds and role responsibilities, views on the role of career guidance in sustainability, the current status of climate action and sustainability practices at their institution, training experiences, suggestions for integrating green guidance, and preferences for supporting resources.

### *3.3.1 Interview language*

Effective interview communication is crucial for obtaining accurate information, as highlighted by Welch and Piekkari (2006). Furthermore, they acknowledge that interviews may sometimes involve a shift between languages or codes, “‘code’ switching” (2006, p. 426), which makes the language of the interview a vital matter to consider (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). The interviewees’ native language is most suitable for clear and comprehensive communication, leading to high-quality data (Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2002, as cited in Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Therefore, selecting the right words when constructing questions is crucial for interviewers to reduce misunderstandings and retrieve accurate information (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). This is also referred to as communication accommodation, whereby communicators adjust to the participants to encourage openness and sharing of experiences by speaking in the participants’ native language (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

In consideration of the benefits of utilising the mother tongue, given that my participants were all bilingual in terms of the Maltese and English languages and to give precedence to their communicative comfort, they were given the choice to use their preferred language. This method aided in fostering authenticity in their responses. The majority opted for Maltese with some code-switching along the interview, with only one participant responding solely in English.

### 3.4 Data analysis

In qualitative research, Creswell (2007) noted that analysis can be a demanding task for researchers. Initially, I planned to utilise software for systematically generating themes and categories. However, I encountered a significant setback due to language constraints. The selected software lacked support for the Maltese language, prompting a thorough exploration of alternative options, all of which proved inadequate for accommodating the linguistic needs of the interviews. Consequently, I decided to shift to manual coding, recognising the necessity of capturing the context of the Maltese language. While this change introduced a time-intensive component to the analysis, preserving the data's integrity was essential, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive analysis despite the absence of automated assistance. A notable benefit of this shift was that manual coding addressed a potential limitation linked to software use. This ensured a balanced focus on the relevance of the generated themes, avoiding undue emphasis on theme recurrence.

In accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis approach, I adhered to the specified steps: "transcription...reading and familiarisation...taking note of items of personal interest...coding...searching for themes...reviewing themes" (pp. 202-203). Subsequently, I created thematic maps, presenting provisional themes, subthemes, and their interconnections. Thematic analysis was instrumental in identifying the findings' main themes, whereby the first step was to draft the interview transcripts and code the transcripts by means of comments within a Word document. For efficiency and re-listening purposes, all interview transcripts were time-stamped. During the coding phase, excerpts which were identified to have

significant meaning were colour-coded for easy reference. This method facilitated the systematic classification of the examined data, which aided its organisation through a system of salient themes and connections generated from the conducted interviews. After reviewing the comments and excerpts, significant segments and relationships were identified, which served as the basis for formulating the initial thematic maps (see Appendix 6). The use of these maps and their reviewing further defined and refined these patterns by completing the final thematic map (see Appendix 7) that served as a foundation to strengthen the analysis and subsequent findings' discussion.

### *3.4.1 Manual development*

Based on these interviews, as presented and discussed in the following chapter, it was evident that practitioners are in need of information, tools and resources that can be applied to the local context. Following a reflective exercise, I felt the need for a practical resource to address this shortage. Thus, a manual entitled *Uncovering green guidance – A practical manual for career guidance practitioners* was prepared in digital format to support the sustainability objective. For ease of reference, this was specifically designed for career guidance practitioners working in the local secondary school sector. This manual addresses a gap whereby, to date, no resources related to sustainability from a career guidance perspective exist for career advisors working within local educational settings. Therefore, such a resource could serve as a starting point and a central reference for integrating sustainability within local career guidance practices. This was supported by insights gained from the literature review and the findings' analysis presented in this study. Accordingly, it incorporates

selected themes and accompanying information, relevant online links, and suggested student activities, among others.

The manual's key aims encompass several critical objectives. Firstly, it aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the current situation concerning climate change and its impact on the evolving world of work. Furthermore, it delves into the role of career guidance, with a specific focus on sustainability or 'green guidance', as a means to foster awareness and integration of environmentally responsible values. Additionally, the manual seeks to empower career guidance practitioners by providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to instil a sense of environmental responsibility in individuals as they reflect and select their future careers.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

#### *3.5.1 Qualitative data collection*

The utilisation of qualitative methods in data collection presents complex ethical dilemmas due to its inherently personal nature (Mertens, 2018). Diener and Crandall (1978, as cited in Bryman, 2016) identified four domains that could manifest ethical concerns, which include potential harm to participants, absence of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and the possibility of deception. To mitigate these matters, this study diligently followed the UREC (2021) guidelines by transparently communicating research objectives, setting clear participant expectations, and ensuring voluntary participant contributions. Thus, the recruitment and interviewing process of interested participants ensured they received detailed information about the research's nature.

The latter group of participants was presented with a comprehensive information letter and consent form in accordance with the guidelines outlined in UREC's (2020) documentation clarifying the study's overarching objectives and the intended utilisation of data. The letter also offered a clear and thorough explanation of the data collection through the audio recordings process. In accordance with the Research Code of Practice (L-Università ta' Malta, 2019), no harm was caused to participants.

### *3.5.2 Participant rights, confidentiality, and anonymity*

Furthermore, when searching for research participants, it is imperative for the researcher to recognise their entitlement to abstain from research involvement, as emphasised by Thomas (2021). Abiding by this, participants in this dissertation were reminded of the voluntary nature of their contribution to the study and their right to withdraw at any time without justification. Participants were required to email a signed consent form, assuring them of privacy and confidentiality, with access limited to only the tutor and me.

Complete adherence to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity is essential in all research, as outlined by Thomas (2021). Throughout the study, a commitment to these two standards was upheld to ensure the utmost protection of the interviewees' identities. This involved refraining from any mention of their names or any personally identifiable information in my written work. In this context, confidentiality was rigorously maintained by safeguarding the participants' identities in the presentation of research findings, ensuring their complete anonymity, and refraining from disclosing any specific school affiliations.

Prior to their participation, participants were provided with an information letter that noted the absence of any references that could identify them, thereby minimising any potential for unintentional deception. Moreover, participants were informed that excerpts from the interviews might be quoted in the dissertation, for which consent was also sought. They were also made aware that the data collected for this research study would be erased once they no longer serve a purpose in the dissertation process. This was in line with the University of Malta Research Code of Practice (L-Università ta' Malta, 2019), which emphasises the importance of upholding participants' "integrity and dignity" (p. 1), preventing any detriment, and obtaining informed consent. Additionally, interview recordings and transcripts were securely kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer to preserve the protection of participant identities.

To further safeguard participants and maintain ethical standards, it is crucial to note that interview ethics were also carefully observed, whereby the interviewer ensured that the selected time, location, and setting were conducive to a comfortable environment for the participants, as described by Oliver (2014). In this regard, the interview sessions were held at a convenient time and location for the participants whilst ensuring that confidentiality and anonymity could be preserved. In accordance with this, I also accommodated participants' preferences for online interviews through the Zoom platform and allowed for audio pauses during the interview upon request, ensuring confidentiality.

## **3.6 Methodological advantages and constraints**

### *3.6.1 Qualitative data focus*

One of the main strengths of this research is that it focused on qualitative data, thus providing in-depth findings on a subject matter that, to date, has not been tapped into in the local arena. Additionally, including data sources that possess expertise in the subject matter enhanced these findings' trustworthiness.

### *3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews*

Interviews offer valuable data flexibility, allowing for the exploration of unplanned questions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that this method comes with its challenges, particularly in terms of time consumption and time available to complete the study and access to respondents (Rubin and Rubin 1995, as cited in Warren, 2001). In spite of these challenges, to ensure a smooth and rigorous data collection, analysis, and discussion process, I implemented plans to keep me on track throughout the research. This included a schedule to conduct the interviews during March 2023 in order to have sufficient time to work on transcribing and organising the data. However, working through time constraints proved to be a significant hurdle during the data collection phase of my research. Acknowledging the participants' busy schedules, I opted for a flexible scheduling approach to alleviate this challenge. This approach allowed participants the autonomy to select interview slots that aligned with their convenience, extending the options to include evenings and weekends. Such a plan was vital to maintain focus and efficiency throughout the various data collection and analysis stages.

### *3.6.3 Bias*

Research entails acknowledging and mitigating errors and bias as part of human involvement (Norris, 1997). Such biases involve subjectivity and researcher bias, which are often deemed unavoidable and significant (Mehra, 2002). Reliability and validity are key considerations in research, particularly in quantitative studies (Joppe, 2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). Reliability ensures consistent outcomes over time, and validity focuses on accurate measurement. In qualitative research, replicating results is less vital. Instead, precision, credibility, and transferability take precedence in evaluating qualitative findings (Golafshani, 2003).

To maintain precision and transferability, I applied purposive sampling to select diverse participants from state secondary schools in Malta, ensuring the study's relevance. Credibility was maintained through a rigorous ethical approval process involving FREC and MREC. This study benefitted from the fact that the researcher is an educator with career guidance responsibilities, facilitating communication with participants and comprehension of education-related concepts due to the shared professional background. However, I acknowledged the inherent presence of errors and biases, as noted by Norris (1997), in terms of subjectivity and potential biases associated with human involvement in the research process. Nevertheless, I was aware that my personal values, perceptions, and professional role may have influenced the research process. To ensure transparency, I made this clear to the

participants and also strived to focus on the participants' input as objectively as possible.

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research is crucial. Williams and Morrow (2009) identified three key aspects: "integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings" (p. 577). In my research, maintaining data integrity was a central focus. I detailed my methodology to allow others to replicate procedures, following Williams and Morrow's recommendations. Additionally, in presenting findings, I used excerpts from transcripts to illustrate the connection between data interpretations and participants' contributions.

#### *3.6.4 Sample size*

While a compact sample can be advantageous, it may restrict the depth of research insights (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A drawback to this study was the limited sample size for data collection. However, to ensure credibility, I selected individuals involved in career guidance (career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers) from state secondary schools in Malta as study candidates due to their expertise in career guidance and the research topic. In this qualitative research, generalisability was not the goal; the focus was on obtaining an in-depth understanding of existing practices. Consequently, it informed the discussion and subsequent recommendations within this dissertation.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed in this dissertation. It highlighted the epistemological orientation and research questions that guided the study. The choice of interpretivism was justified for its relevance to the research objectives. The research questions, sampling method, data collection and analysis techniques were outlined. Ethical considerations were also addressed, emphasising participant rights, confidentiality, and anonymity. The methodological advantages and disadvantages were discussed in terms of qualitative data, semi-structured interviews, the researcher's professional background, and sample size. Overall, this methodology laid the foundation for a thorough exploration of sustainability perceptions and practices in career guidance within local secondary schools. The following chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the findings.

## **4 Findings, analysis, and discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter delves into a comprehensive examination of green career guidance in Maltese government secondary schools, aiming to explore its presence, strategies, and impact as implemented by diverse individuals with career guidance responsibilities. The primary objectives of this chapter include assessing the presence and implementation of green career guidance in government secondary schools and examining the approaches adopted by different career guidance practitioners. Additionally, the aim is to uncover the reasons for its absence where applicable.

A thematic analysis approach facilitated the process of uncovering the core themes, patterns, and connections central to this dissertation's research questions. This study focused on the role of career guidance in the context of green guidance in Maltese government secondary schools. It further explored how career guidance practitioners address green guidance, the benefits they gain, and the challenges they encounter when implementing green guidance principles. Two central themes were generated: the current career guidance practices and the enhancement of green guidance integration. These themes directly address the research objectives, allowing for the exploration of the existing state of career guidance in local secondary schools and the efforts or lack thereof to incorporate environmentally conscious principles into these practices.

The research findings are presented in a discursive style, whereby the generated themes served as discussion points in answering the research questions, as can be

followed in this chapter. Significant excerpts from the interview transcripts were used to illustrate the respective arguments throughout the findings, analysis, and discussion of the collected data. All the interviews with practitioners were held in the language they were most comfortable with, whereby almost all chose to express themselves in Maltese with some code-switching to English as needed. Thus, selected interview quotes in Maltese are also provided with a translation to English for easier access to non-Maltese readers. Original excerpts are presented in italics to differentiate them from translated content in English, as needed. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. This was presented in a table in section 3.2.

## **4.2 Current career guidance practices**

This section offers an overview of the interviewees' professional roles and their significance in their careers. It also explores essential aspects of their work with secondary school students, including session types, associated responsibilities, and career guidance activities, highlighting their primary focus areas when assisting students. Career advisors (Alexia, Gail, and Oliver) offer one-to-one sessions that are also employed by both guidance and PSCD teachers (Vivianne and Doreen). Group sessions are also a common practice involving all the participants, with Alexia, Gail, and Doreen facilitating voluntary sessions according to students' needs.

Productivity and effectiveness in career guidance depend on various factors and approaches. While a structured, objective framework can yield positive results, the practitioner's subjective choices can shape the outcomes described by the different

participants. This can cater to the shifting world of careers (Bors Borbély-Pecze, 2021; Katsarov et al., 2012), and one should consider the skills necessary for thriving in an increasingly automated world (Purchase, 2019). It could also mean that, rather than merely providing a compilation of job roles and corresponding remuneration (Maggi, 2019), the participants are genuinely acting as “conduits” (O’Shea et al., 2022, p. 8) in assisting students to approach the future with adaptability skills (Covey, 2019).

Correspondingly, participants indicated an array of essential areas when dealing with career guidance with their students, which revolve around the need for personalised and comprehensive approaches according to the respective students. Differentiated programmes tailored to address emerging needs were observed to focus on the cultivation of soft skills and adapted according to the specific year groups (Alexia). Such programmes incorporate mock interviews, option choice guidance, and preparation for work and post-secondary institutions. Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing assistance is another service provided (Alexia, Miriam, and Max), together with interview skills in the form of group interventions, particularly with Year 10 students (Alexia, Gail, Miriam, and Max). Furthermore, Alexia and Whitney incorporate one-on-one sessions, employing a student-centred approach. In these sessions, they meet with every Year 8 student individually to address their specific needs regarding their subject choice for the following year.

Similarly, Year 11 students receive one-to-one guidance concerning post-secondary choices. Other participants did not mention such individualised sessions on a large scale except for Alexia and Whitney, but collaboration and liaison among Career

Advisors (CAs), Guidance Teachers (GTs), and PSCD teachers were cited by all the participants. Parental involvement is also addressed, with a summer walk-in service (Alexia) and other support as needed by parents (Pamela, Gail, and Doreen). Part of the responsibilities categorised by the participants included orientation visits to various work environments and participation in career fairs. Furthermore, the participants' expertise is sought through outreach efforts, and they often receive requests for career-related guidance from other staff members to be held during particular subject classes (Alexia, Pamela, Gail, Whitney, Miriam, and Max).

Upon analysing these varied approaches, it is evident that working with secondary school students in career development requires an individualised approach. The fundamental principles of inclusivity and flexibility are central to valuable career guidance, and empowerment surfaced as a universal theme throughout the interviews.

#### *4.2.1 Focus area: Empowerment*

Mann (2022) underlined the importance of exploring career opportunities for developing professional skills, paralleling the idea that education needs to extend beyond the classroom to prepare students for the realities of the working world, especially in the context of sustainability. Whitney's distinct approach prioritises active student engagement and personal research to keep the provided information relevant. What sets Whitney apart is encouraging student participation in the research process through shared exploration. This approach underscores the commitment to

empowering and equipping students with current information for career decisions, particularly in the context of the green transition and sustainability demands.

Whitney's approach aligns with Mann's ideas and local educational policies, including the *Career Guidance Policy for Schools*, the *National Curriculum Framework (NCF)*, and the *Career Learning and Development Framework*, which aim to foster lifelong learners, prepare students for the professional world, and nurture engaged citizens. Career guidance practitioners are responsible for staying current with the evolving demands for "future skills needs" (McKenzie, 2020, p. 4). In correspondence to McKenzie's affirmation, Whitney's holistic approach underscores the commitment to updating herself and equipping students with up-to-date, relevant information for their career choices. In this manner, students are empowered to navigate challenges and find solutions, vital skills in today's evolving sustainability and environmental consciousness landscape.

In the context of student empowerment, Gail and Oliver underlined the importance of challenging students' misconceptions about career development regarding their capabilities and social situations and engaging in discussions to address these doubts. Oliver prioritised encouraging students to persist when they are inclined to give up and developing skills that enhance their perseverance.

Oliver on empowering students: *Student ngħinu jemmen fih innifsu, li kapaçi hu jibni xi hağa li forsi qabel kien jaħseb li mhux kapaçi jasal għaliha.*

Oliver on empowering students: I help students believe in themselves and that they can do something they might not have thought they could achieve before.

Thus, employing Oliver's outlook helps students broaden their horizons by considering options that might have been overlooked. This scenario resonates with

Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise, which explains how individuals, especially during childhood and adolescence, limit their career choices based on gender, social class, race, and perceived abilities (Sharf, 2013). Vivianne and Gail play a significant role in conveying that everyone can pursue a unique career path without predetermined constraints. Then again, Gail also stressed the need for a touch of realism, encouraging reflection on students' aspirations while avoiding undue limitations. *"I also believe that they have to be a bit realistic. I'm not saying that they do not dream; I do help them and guide them to reflect, but I don't want them to feel limited"* (Gail). By gaining expertise and understanding their options, students can make informed and satisfying career choices, thus addressing the compromise stage of Gottfredson's theory.

The practices mentioned above also connect to the broader concept of emerging careers, by which Vivianne and Gail encourage students to explore and embrace new opportunities. As Vivianne succinctly phrased it, *"I keep telling them, at the end of the day, you might be doing this, and this job might not even exist in 10 years...so it might be something completely different"*. Correspondingly, Gail maintained, *"We do reflect on the current situation, but I always specify that this is how things are today. In the future, these might change, new opportunities might arise, and your situation may also change"* (Gail). Alexia, Vivianne, and Nathalie highlighted the importance of preparing students for an ever-evolving job market and stressed the value of equipping them with essential, transferable skills applicable to emerging prospects. Alexia, in particular, stressed the relevance of such skills in the context of a green economy.

These practices employed by Alexia, Vivianne, Gail, and Nathalie reinforce Hansen's (2011) Integrative Life Planning theory, which calls attention to extended considerations in career choices. Incorporating this theory into green career guidance within education motivates students to envision paths beyond traditional jobs and explore emerging roles in the evolving job market. Therefore, through these participants' proactive guidance, students are prepared to address the constraints of circumscription and compromise per Gottfredson's theory and explore and seize opportunities in the ever-changing landscape of emerging careers.

Then again, Max put forward a crucial element: supporting students in following studies when their future destination remains uncertain, given the continuously evolving job markets and changing career opportunities. The challenge is compounded by the fact that today's generation tends to focus on the present, often perceiving the future as distant, as highlighted by Max on offering relevant career guidance, presented further on in this section. However, it is crucial to address this challenge, as failure to expose students to emerging career possibilities may lead them to cling to conventional jobs, potentially limiting their horizons.

Irving (2014) encouraged individuals to think deeply about their career choices and how they can affect society and the environment. Similarly, one of the goals of the NCF is to inspire students to adapt to the changing demands of society by reflecting on themselves (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). This idea also parallels the insights of Parsons (1909, as cited in Patton and McMahon in 2014), who called attention to the significance of understanding oneself, the work environment, and how these factors relate when deciding on a career. In this context,

Doreen plays a vital role in helping students with their career choices by promoting self-reflection and encouraging them to think about their career goals.

Thornton et al.'s (2019) discussions on labour market dynamics highlight the significance of skills requirements. In accordance with this, the ILO (2019) outlined a list of essential competencies necessary for green employment, encompassing communication, leadership, and collaboration. Within this context, Doreen helps students consider their experiences, such as babysitting and community club involvement, which helps students acknowledge the practical competencies they are acquiring, such as time management and teamwork, and how these are directly applicable to the world of work.

Doreen on self-reflection and the importance of skill appreciation:

*Importanti wkoll li jkunu jafu lilhom infushom. Nemmen li minn hemm trid tibda: personal side. Inħobb inġeġhelhom jirrealizzaw ukoll li ċertu ħiliet għax-xogħol, li ħa jużaw 'ilquddiem, digà qeġħdin fihom, jigifieri huma li jridu jagħmlu huwa li jindunaw li dik il-ħila li għandhom hija tajba għax-xogħol.*

Doreen on self-reflection and the importance of skill appreciation:

They must also be self-aware. I believe that you need to start from there: the personal side. I would also like to make them realise that they already have specific job skills, meaning that they need to recognise that their skills are suitable for work.

Doreen serves as an exemplary model for how career advisors can act as valuable guides, aiding students in approaching their futures with adaptability, as underscored by Covey's (2019) perspective on how career advisors can serve as valuable channels into the world of work. Additionally, the ability to recognise the value of existing skills that can be transferred to future jobs supports the idea that generic competencies can be instrumental in green career paths (ILO, 2019; Kwauk & Casey, 2021). In particular, analytical competencies, such as challenging the status quo and

norms, are crucial for fostering individuals' reflection about their career choices (Hooley, 2021, 2022a, 2022b) and the broader societal and environmental impacts. In a knowledge-driven economy, success in secondary education goes beyond rote learning and involves vital attributes such as critical thinking, effective communication, and environmental knowledge (Leicht et al., 2018; Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). Focus on public speaking with the aim of honing strong communication skills among Miriam's students was pointed out, reaffirming Leicht et al.'s and Thirupathy and Mustapha's assertions.

Moreover, teaching analytical thinking, particularly in the context of sustainable futures and social justice, is crucial (ILO, 2019; Irving, 2014). In relation to this, Max's emphasis on critical thinking is not limited to personal growth but extends to green skills. Max underscores the significance of challenging oneself in terms of personal views, expectations, or even the content students consume. This resonates with the concept of developing a critical mindset, highly emphasised in the presented literature and the common objectives outlined in various policy documents (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007; Gravina & Camilleri, 2020; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). Additionally, Max's efforts in interview preparation and CV writing for potential temporary jobs also reflect the challenges students face when transitioning from school to the workforce. This practical approach sets a foundation for the realistic aspects of employment transitions discussed in the literature.

Max on relevant career guidance: *Hafna drabi, anke dak li huwa career education, iż-żgħażaġh jekk ma jkunx imminenti, 'qed nagħmel interview imma bil-ħsieb li x-xahar id-dieħel ha*

Max on relevant career guidance: Many times, even when it comes to career education for young people, if it isn't imminent, 'I'm doing interviews but with the aim that by the end of the

*nfittex xogħol', jekk ma ttihx dan it-tip ta' meaning, qisu anke l-impenn ikun naqra fjakk. Allura ngħaqquad l-interviews u CV writing ma' summer job.*

month, I'll be looking for a job', if you don't give this kind of meaning, the commitment tends to be taken lightly. So, I combine the interviews and CV writing with a summer job.

This is a crucial point, as it demonstrates a tangible practice of career guidance with imminent relevance to the students and how such an initiative adds significant meaning. In many cases, what is perceived as career education may not feel immediate to young people. Without providing this sense of immediacy, it might be viewed as a commitment that can be taken lightly. Therefore, integrating interviews and CV writing with a prospective job in the near future is a practical way to bridge this gap and make career education more relevant to the current needs of the students.

Additionally, Vivianne consistently takes the initiative to connect the social dimension of careers with various examples. She illustrated how career choices intersect with different subjects, delving into consumerism and questioning the values associated with material possessions. Vivianne's intention is to explore the societal impact of careers and advocate for social justice.

Vivianne on career and social justice:  
*When I talk about careers, I try to link a lot to the social aspect...social justice. Fejn jidħol social aspect ma' social justice, I bring up a lot of those options – ma tantx jagħtu kashom qisu dawn l-affarijiet. So, I bring it up.*

Vivianne on career and social justice:  
When I talk about careers, I try to link it a lot to the social aspect...social justice. Wherever the social aspect intersects with social justice, I introduce a wide range of options and ideas – at times, they overlook the significance of these matters, so I actively bring them into the conversation.

Empowerment in career guidance practices serves as the catalyst for students to engage in their career development actively. This section presented participants'

focus on empowering their students through career guidance to provide them with the necessary resources, knowledge, and self-confidence to make well-informed career decisions. These practices are not only in line with the ideals of various scholars and policy frameworks, but they also encourage students to challenge misconceptions, broaden their horizons, and consider emerging career opportunities, especially in the context of sustainability. Furthermore, developing critical thinking, communication skills, and the ability to adapt to the changing demands of society and the environment ensure that students are equipped for meaningful and successful career choices in a dynamic professional world.

#### *4.2.2 Sustainability in context: Implementation and maintenance*

To promote environmental sustainability through education, it is crucial to establish supportive learning environments that encompass dedicated class time and activities beyond traditional classrooms, such as extracurricular programmes (Sterling, 2001, as cited in the European Commission, 2022b). Local educational systems, like PSCD and *EkoSkola*, encompass elements designed to impart knowledge and foster sustainable attitudes and practices with specific objectives in this area. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, a significant gap exists between environmental sustainability and career choices. Therefore, participants were asked about the current state of their school and college settings to assess the extent to which these environments support green practices as a foundation for incorporating them into the career selection process.

One highlighted aspect of implementing environmentally friendly measures was the need for enforcement and realistic application through role models (Pamela and Whitney). Several challenges hinder effective implementation, characterised by the lack of concrete actions following environmental commitments, which signifies the disparity between verbal agreements and tangible actions, resulting in disjointed efforts (Vivianne, Whitney, Doreen, Miriam, and Max). This lack of follow-through results in incomplete or ineffective implementation of green measures. This observation corresponds to Leon Tikly's (as cited in CICA, 2023c) emphasis on the striking disparity between policy intentions and real-world outcomes, underscoring a fundamental implementation challenge in realising meaningful change.

Vivianne's comments revealed a recurring lack of maintenance and follow-through regarding sustainable and environmentally friendly initiatives. A number of participants (Pamela, Vivianne, Whitney, Miriam, and Max) pointed out that even the separation of garbage, considered a simple task, poses a significant issue in the current context, let alone in more complex matters, such as integrating sustainable values into career path selections. Despite the presence of effort from higher-ups and the mention of specific actions, the latter are not consistently maintained. Vivianne emphasised the mismatch between words and actions, the lack of communication on ongoing school eco-friendly initiatives, and the need for better reinforcement. She expressed frustration that ideas are put forward but not fully realised or explained to students, resulting in a superficial approach to these crucial matters.

Vivianne on disjointed efforts: *They throw the idea to the kids, u m'hemmx il-buildup, imma mbagħad ma*

Vivianne on disjointed efforts: They throw the idea to the kids, but then there's no follow-through... The same

*nispjegalekx għalfejn...The same thing with the climate, qisu, we throw an idea, 'ejja ħa nagħmlu xi ħaġa', but not the story within it, the why and the consequences. You know, like mela, we did this...tick, we did this, tick."*

thing with the climate, you know, we present an idea, 'let's do something', but not the story within it, the why and the consequences. You know, it's like we did this...tick, we did this, tick.

The issue raised by Vivianne regarding the lack of communication and awareness about sustainable practices within their work environments is significant. This situation underscores the necessity for improved communication and information dissemination about eco-friendly initiatives. Instead of limiting such efforts among those interested in the subject, there should be a more proactive approach to sharing this information with a broader audience. This could enhance awareness and attract more individuals to participate in the cause actively. Alexia and Gail's experiences, where eco-friendly initiatives and student environmental ambassadors promote sustainability, are positive examples of fostering an inclusive and informed sustainability culture in workplaces and educational institutions. This illustrates the development of an ingrained sustainable mindset rather than merely introducing the concept when students are older and attempting to have them embrace it at that time, as echoed by Pamela and Max. Pamela also raised a critical point about the concept of sustainability by maintaining that it should not be exclusively tied to careers, as such a narrow focus might not effectively cultivate the sustainability mentality.

However, I don't think it should solely be connected to careers because if it's only linked to one thing – careers, it doesn't become ingrained in the mentality. I think it's more important to have it on a broader spectrum, so it becomes a mentality, and then automatically, it doesn't need to be enforced. It becomes a way of thinking. If you try to make it part of everything, if you make it something obvious that everywhere should be green, naturally, even careers will be greener. (Pamela)

Max on the importance of exposure to sustainability: *Exposure is extremely important; mhux la kemm tfajthom fl-ambjent u f'daqqa waħda ġew sustainable.*

Max on the importance of exposure to sustainability: Exposure is extremely important; it's not just about placing them in the environment \* [referring to the natural environment] and having them become sustainable overnight.

Pamela and Max's contributions underscore the importance of linking this sustainability to values, which should be embedded in our upbringing and supported by systems in place at both micro and macro levels. Sustainability through career choices is merely a strand in the sustainability area, suggesting the need for a comprehensive approach to sustainability that embodies cultural values and societal structures integral to fostering a sustainability mentality.

A notable comment by several participants, when asked about current sustainable practices within their work environments, was that there may be things going on, but sometimes they get to know about them by chance. Conversely, Alexia, Gail, and Oliver asserted that eco-friendly initiatives are a regular practice in their cases, whereby Gail provided comprehensive, valuable insights into the current sustainability practices at her school. She mentioned dedicated individuals or groups who take the lead in promoting sustainability within the school community so that it is not just about having sustainability on paper but ensuring that it is actively practised and promoted. Using offline (notice board) and online (social media) channels to reach a wider audience ensures that information is easily accessible to students and staff and not limited to one medium. *"The presence is really felt. They have environmental ambassadors, and they do outreach and activities. Even when you enter the school, they have a notice board with updated information, a Facebook page, and carry out projects"* (Gail).

For a lasting impact, such practices must become integral to daily life. When students regularly experience sustainability, they are more likely to carry these practices into their future careers. Addressing these issues involves focusing on practical methods and aligning actions with words. Combined with green career guidance, it can help bridge the implementation gap and significantly contribute to sustainability. Despite numerous campaigns and initiatives for responsible waste management, recycling, and broader sustainability goals, there is still a pervasive sense that desired progress and sustainability objectives remain unfulfilled. This persistent gap between efforts and outcomes prompts a closer examination of values concerning environmental responsibility and sustainability, which is discussed in the next section.

#### *4.2.3 Sustainability in context: Values*

Raatikainen et al. (2021) underscored the significance of valuing the natural world in the pursuit of sustainability. This emphasis on nature has led to a noticeable shift in values, with eco-conscious choices increasingly shaping daily lives and driving tangible actions towards sustainability. Lifestyle modifications (O'Donoghue, 2020), such as diet and air travel reduction, signify such concrete undertakings (Hašková, 2020). Correspondingly, Plant (CICA, 2023b) spoke about the need for a paradigm shift in our approach to sustainability and emphasised that it should not be viewed as a fleeting concern but as a fundamental way of thinking. This change involves integrating green guidance and considering the environmental impact of career choices (Plant, 2021).

In relation to this, Whitney and Doreen underscored a significant concern – the lack of inherent sustainable values in students’ daily lives. This raises questions about the challenges of integrating sustainability into prospective work environments, making it difficult for students to conceptualise and reflect upon sustainable practices within chosen career paths. However, the absence of these values in one’s personal life diminishes the likelihood of their effective integration into professional activities. This underscores the importance of nurturing a culture of sustainable values at the individual level, laying the foundation for a more environmentally responsible and conscientious workforce.

Whitney on lack of sustainable values:

*La inti sustainability isn’t practised around you every day, kif ha tghaddilek minn rasek biex tkun sustainable fuq ix-xogħol?*

Whitney on lack of sustainable values:

If sustainability isn’t practised around you every day, how can you think about being sustainable at work?

Doreen on lack of sustainable values:

*Naħseb jiena, l-istudenti, jekk ma jkunux imrawmin \* [refers to sustainable values], fejn tidħol klima, environment sustainability eċċ., naħseb naqra diffiċli biex jiena fil-guidance session, ħa mmur għal dan il-green guidance. Jekk huma għad m’għandhomx dak -awareness, jekk qas qed jifhmu, kif jiena f’dik is-session ħa niltaqa’ magħhom fuq xi ħaġa li huma qas jistgħu jagħmlu connection? Naħseb naraha diffiċli immens.*

Doreen on lack of sustainable values:

I think that if students aren’t brought up accustomed \* [refers to sustainable values], if they aren’t already engaged in matters related to climate, environmental sustainability, etc., I find it quite difficult in the guidance session, to delve into this green guidance. If they don’t yet have that awareness, if they don’t understand yet, how can I, in that session, connect with them on something they’re not yet able to make a connection with? I find it immensely difficult.

Global youth concern about climate change and their inclination towards a transformative mindset has been underscored in various literature pieces (Deloitte, 2021, 2022; European Commission, 2022b; Hašková, 2020; Horn-Muller, 2021; Ro,

2022). Two participants (Pamela and Doreen) deeply discussed this shift in belief systems, focusing on prioritising and internalising sustainability values. Pamela stressed the necessity of modifying one's mindset and cultivating a sustainable way of thinking rather than associating it solely with specific careers or viewing it as a temporary concern. Pamela also highlighted the importance of instilling sustainability in early childhood to make it an integral part of an individual's value system. Significantly, during the PISA 2018 survey, Maltese young people displayed exceptional awareness of global concerns, with a substantial majority avidly tracking global events on social media (OECD, 2020). However, the findings from the conducted interviews indicate otherwise. Pamela discussed the diverse value systems among students, where some naturally embrace sustainable thinking while others do not. In the discussion about students' subject choices, Pamela, Vivianne, and Max emphasised students' inclination to prioritise ones that they feel will lead them to the highest financial gain. Drawing from Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, where self-concept and stereotypes play a role in career choices (Sharf, 2013), students who opt for financially profitable careers based solely on their monetary advantage might overlook other alternatives, including sustainable career options. Additionally, such materialistic tendencies observed in students could fuel excessive consumerism and environmental degradation in its process, all the while defeating the sought-after green transition. The challenge lies in shifting their focus from instant gratification to long-term consequences and the well-being of society and the environment, i.e., the basic principles of sustainability.

Hansen (2023) advocated for the integration of values assessment in career development, and Kamis et al. (2017) stressed the significance of nurturing environmental appreciation, fostering the essential sustainability mindset, and early skill development. Nonetheless, attempting to alter a deeply ingrained “social practice that has embedded itself as an institution, and acquired its own traction, traditions, and legitimacy over the years, represents an immensely challenging endeavour” (Sultana, 2017b, p. 427). Similarly, within the context of sustainable behaviour, Gonon (CICA, 2023c) concurred that changing ourselves is not a simple task, and merely adopting eco-friendly behaviours does not ensure humanity’s success. Values underpin belief systems and behaviours, which influence decision-making and priorities. One participant (Gail) pointed out this issue and disclosed that when she was reading and reflecting on the concept of green guidance integration, she realised that she had never thought of it before.

When I was reading about it, I realised it’s an area which, before this, I wouldn’t have thought it was something I have to address. I don’t do it consciously. It made me realise that I need to start addressing it more. (Gail)

This issue is vital as it underscores that sustainable thinking is not always innate. While acknowledging the importance of instilling values in young individuals from an early age, it is essential to consider the challenges local practitioners encounter because of the deficiency of sustainability as a societal and cultural norm. If sustainability through careers does not naturally occur to practitioners, the likelihood of its introduction to students becomes remote, thus presenting a substantial impediment to green career guidance. Nevertheless, participants exhibited a readiness to explore the integration of sustainability into their professional lives,

even if not inherently associating it with career choices. The interviews showed that they recognised its potential impact through their indirect or ad hoc approaches. However, a concerted effort must be made to identify actionable steps to overcome this value-related barrier.

The previous four sections dealt with the current practices, to date, among the interviewed practitioners regarding sustainability and the integration of green career guidance in their practice. In the following section, the current career guidance practices are used as a foundation to discuss the integration of a sustainable approach to career choices. Constraining factors such as awareness, resistance, resources, and impartiality concerns are addressed, along with suggested strategies, including training and tools, to address green career guidance in local state secondary schools.

### **4.3 Enhancing green guidance integration**

The shift towards eco-friendly employment practices often requires skill adjustments, including retraining and enhancing existing competencies, which can lead to new career opportunities (ILO, 2019). Individuals need guidance on the green job market and the essential skills for these roles (ETF, 2020). Limited understanding of this sector can hinder access to such opportunities (ILO, 2022). Thus, practitioners who possess this knowledge can contribute to sustainability and social justice, aligning with green guidance principles (Plant, 2015). This involves considering careers that promote sustainability within a just, green transition. To achieve this, career guidance practitioners must be well-informed to guide their clients effectively.

The following sections explore the critical aspects of enhancing the integration of green guidance within the local secondary school career guidance framework. The interviews revealed several constraining factors that impede the infusion of sustainability principles through green guidance into this framework. These aspects encompass issues such as awareness and knowledge of sustainability and green guidance, resistance, limited availability of resources, and concerns regarding impartiality. Furthermore, guided by discussions with participants, suggested strategies to mitigate these constraints and promote a more robust integration of green principles into career guidance are offered. These approaches involve comprehensive training initiatives and engaging tools designed to facilitate the incorporation of sustainability principles through green guidance. Addressing these elements is pivotal to career guidance operations and signifies a proactive step in preparing the next generation for a world where environmental responsibility and sustainability are paramount.

#### *4.3.1 Constraining factor: Awareness and knowledge of sustainability*

Considering the abovementioned parameters, part of the interview required the participants to express their thoughts and understanding of the following words and phrases: ‘sustainability’ and ‘green guidance’. They were also asked if they knew about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These questions assessed participants’ knowledge of pertinent topics and tailored the conversation content to each participant’s current understanding. Additionally, based on the interviewees’ answers, I could establish a shared understanding of terminology, reducing the risk of confusion and fostering effective communication. Thus, when participants were

unfamiliar with any of the concepts, I provided a brief explanation to progress with the interview questions, particularly when it came to asking about current green guidance practices or lack thereof and potential integration matters.

Alexia, Whitney, and Oliver highlighted the growing prominence of sustainability, all stressing the need for an increased commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility within the workplace. This corresponds to Hašková (2020), who highlighted that climate change and sustainability have increasingly become central topics in public discussions, media, and daily interactions.

The United Nations, in its 1987 definition, framed sustainability as the practice of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. This definition served as a foundational reference throughout this dissertation. In comparison, all participants demonstrated a solid understanding of sustainability, and common elements among the participants were the long-term focus and realistic perspective of doing things through planning. *“Sustainability means doing something that can be carried on, something that can be continued; using resources in an intelligent way to make them last as much as they can”* (Gail). Pamela added that sustainable practices are ones *“that don’t have a harmful effect on other things”*. Additionally, Vivianne asserted that sustainability is integral to every aspect of life, with Miriam contributing a more elaborate explanation.

Miriam on sustainability: *Li għandek xi haġa li tista’ tkompli tagħmilha jew tużaha mingħajr ma taħliha. Għandek l-ambjent, l-użu tal-ikel, jew il-hela tal-ikel, lifestyle.*

Miriam on sustainability: That you have something that you can continue doing or using without wasting it. This includes the environment, food consumption, food waste, and lifestyle.

Regarding sustainability, I wanted to gauge the participants' awareness of the United Nations' SDGs. These goals succeeded the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, addressing issues such as poverty, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and educational enhancement (ILO, 2023a), and the SDGs aim to build upon unfinished objectives from previously established development goals (United Nations, 2015). As for awareness of SDGs, two participants (Doreen and Nathalie) were aware of them, whereby Doreen provided an overview, and Nathalie was also aware of the Millennium Development Goals.

These responses acknowledged the urgency of addressing sustainability and environmental responsibility; however, the discussion often revolved solely around promoting eco-friendly practices, which diverges significantly from the pivotal role that literature has demonstrated in career guidance. The extracted literature indicated a clear direction: career guidance professionals must recognise their role and make adjustments to address the challenge posed by climate change (ETF, 2020; Hašková, 2020; Plant, 2020b; Purchase, 2019; van Brussel & Semeijn, 2020). This includes exploring sustainable career pathways (NCGE, 2022b) and implementing eco-friendly guidance principles, encompassing environmental consciousness and training for professionals (Plant, 2020a). In light of this and the appreciation of the growing prominence and importance of sustainability awareness and practices in various aspects of life by the participants, a critical oversight becomes evident in these findings. It is concerning that none of the study's participants brought up sustainability in the context of employment. Thus, even though awareness of the importance of sustainability was acknowledged across various aspects of life, this

was not applied to the career sphere, clearly indicating a shortage of awareness. This oversight highlights a local gap, which is illustrated through this finding. While there are various local educational initiatives aimed at imparting knowledge and nurturing sustainable attitudes in daily life within the educational system, these programmes fail to establish connections between environmental sustainability and career decisions. Gail reiterated this, *“I realised how little importance we give it. So, it made me aware that it’s a topic which we, I would say, completely ignore. Let me own that; it’s not something I take up with my students.”* She continued to mention various limitations that hinder this integration, which are discussed in other sections.

Moreover, Plant acknowledged the difficulties in guiding discussions about green guidance and sustainability, as these topics are complex and come with the risk of diluting the concept of sustainability (NCGE, 2022a). Sustainability spans across various domains and can be overused or applied too broadly, potentially turning it into a catchall phrase or a trendy policy term. This was echoed by Max, as illustrated below.

Max on sustainability: *Kultant, hija buzzword. Kultant naqbdū ma’ tema, nahseb tkun glamorous għal dak il-perjodu, u ndaħħluha f’kollox.*

Max on sustainability: *Sometimes, it’s a buzzword. Sometimes, we embrace a theme, deeming it glamorous for a while, and include it in everything.*

One example of such concept dilution is greenwashing, through which some businesses claim to be sustainable when they make only minor changes without substantial evidence, giving the impression of sustainability without genuine commitment (Kim et al., 2017). Vivianne and Whitney also referred to this practice in their comments, which prompts considerations regarding the need for individuals

to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills to differentiate authentic sustainability initiatives from mere marketing tactics. This underscores the significance of these skills as an integral part of employability within a green transition (European Commission, 2022b; ILO, 2018, 2019; Kwauk & Casey, 2021; United Nations, 2018).

#### *4.3.2 Constraining factor: Awareness and knowledge of green guidance*

Plant (2005, as cited in Pouyaud & Guichard, 2018) forged the concept that career guidance should extend beyond self-exploration, question economic growth, and focus on sustainable career choices through green guidance (Plant, 2015). Despite the various local educational programmes and initiatives towards sustainability, information on local green guidance in Maltese state secondary schools is absent, with no empirical studies conducted to date. Nonetheless, I wanted to explore awareness and knowledge of green guidance, if any, among the selected participants.

In this study, participants' engagement with green guidance varied significantly. Several participants (Alexia, Vivianne, Gail, Miriam, and Oliver) researched green guidance after receiving the information letter, reflecting their interest in delving deeper into this topic. Conversely, a group of participants (Pamela, Whitney, Doreen, and Nathalie) had no prior knowledge of green guidance. Pamela, however, stood out by showing a keen interest and inquiring about the practices associated with green guidance.

Alexia and Vivianne, on the other hand, went beyond mere awareness, highlighting the importance of linking the social aspect and social justice to career choices. These

initial responses and levels of awareness set the stage for a more in-depth exploration of participants' incorporation of green guidance in the subsequent discussions. Thus, this demonstrates the proactive approach of several participants who read about green guidance before the interview. Additionally, Alexia's interpretation of green guidance centred on career advisors guiding students to broaden their perspective beyond financial rewards and consider the environmental and societal implications of their career choices. In a parallel manner, Vivianne reflected on green guidance by drawing connections to her professional practices and underscoring the significance of integrating social justice considerations into career decision-making.

Despite varying degrees of engagement with green guidance among participants, some demonstrated a proactive interest in exploring this topic, while others lacked prior knowledge. Nevertheless, integrating green guidance faces challenges, including resistance to career education, limited resources, and impartiality concerns, as will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

#### *4.3.3 Constraining factor: Resistance*

Addressing the challenges encountered in career guidance, as highlighted by Pamela, Vivianne, and Doreen, particularly students' resistance to engaging with career-related matters, holds significant importance for successfully developing their career paths.

Vivianne on career guidance challenges: *Spécjalment il-5s*  
\*[referring to Year 11 students], they get bored of it \* [referring to careers]  
...I guess we may be doing it the wrong

Vivianne on career guidance challenges: Especially the Form 5s  
\*[referring to Year 11 students], they get bored of it \* [referring to careers] ...I guess we might be doing it

*way; naħseb nağħmluha boring way... ilhom jisimğhu.*

the wrong way; I think we make it boring... they've grown tired of hearing about it.

Doreen on career guidance challenges:  
*Kulhadd jibbumbardjahom... Qisu hemm id-demands ta' kulhadd, jippretenduhom li diğà jafu x'karriera ħa jagħmlu. Kultant toħolqilhom naqra pressure wkoll.*

Doreen on career guidance challenges:  
Everyone bombards them... Everyone has their demands, expecting students to know what career they will follow. Sometimes, this creates pressure as well.

The continuous influx of information and pressures from various sources, which seem to possess demands and expectations regarding students' career choices, can be overwhelming. This undue pressure often inadvertently disengages students from exploring potential career options and contemplating their environmental impact. They may find themselves unprepared to involve themselves in career discussions, much less considering the ecological consequences of their career selections. Thus, this abundance of information and advice may sometimes work against its intended purpose, further increasing students' reluctance. A revised approach that fosters students' exploration of their interests and passions without the weight of external expectations is essential to involve students and help them overcome their reluctance. By cultivating an atmosphere of curiosity and self-discovery, students can be empowered to make career choices freely and responsibly. To address this situation, Nathalie is careful not to subject students to external pressures that demand them to have a predetermined career path.

Nathalie on career guidance challenges:  
*Noqğhod attenta biex ma nağħmillhomx pressure li jħossuhom suppost diğà dawn jafu x'se jagħmlu, ġħax inħoss li dik tistressjahom ħafna.*

Nathalie on career guidance challenges:  
I'm cautious not to pressure students into feeling that they should already know what job they will do, as I feel that this stresses them a lot.

Academic and societal pressures can negatively affect students, limiting their flexibility and opportunities. This can make students feel rushed and confined, reducing their willingness to consider alternative career paths, especially those related to green and sustainable careers. This goes against a fundamental principle of green career guidance: empowering young individuals to unlock their potential as changemakers and contribute to sustainability (Nota et al., 2020). Moreover, stress-induced pressures may disrupt effective career planning, leading to hasty and possibly ill-informed decisions. Consequently, it is crucial to allow students the freedom to explore, choose, and prepare for their careers without unnecessary pressure. One practical approach to achieving this is through research and exploration of various career pathways, as previously mentioned by Whitney. Thus, as Miriam suggested, one needs to *“engage the students as then they are better at receiving what we are presenting”*.

Further to career-related discussion resistance, Gail emphasised that students often do not prioritise the sustainability subject, which poses a further challenge. In addition, Gail noted that if she were to make efforts to engage the students, there is a risk that it might inadvertently create an additional obstacle to the subject. This highlights the delicate balance that career guidance practitioners must maintain between fostering student engagement and ensuring they do not inadvertently discourage students' interest in the subject. In light of the challenges related to student resistance in career-related discussions, as emphasised by Gail, it becomes evident that resource allocation plays a pivotal role and highlights the importance of having appropriate resources in place to pique students' interest.

#### *4.3.4 Constraining factor: Limited resources*

In 2010, Mifsud pointed out the restrictions stemming from the extensive curriculum demands that impinge on promoting environmental awareness, which he saw as a factor that stifles creativity. This reality continues to be a contributing factor. It persists over a decade later, whereby curriculum constraints have once again been consistently highlighted as an enduring issue, which limits the scope of career guidance sessions to routine matters, such as subject choice, CV writing, and interview skills (Doreen and Oliver). This shortcoming is a fundamental stumbling block that affects the ability to implement ideas, particularly in terms of sustainability within career guidance (Doreen, Oliver, and Max). These challenges are intensified by the lack of time and human resources.

Prominent organisations (ILO, 2022; UNEP, 2015) have suggested collaborative frameworks that involve multiple stakeholders, focusing on human capital and promoting long-term planning and ongoing system monitoring. Moreover, the European Commission (2022b) drew attention to the importance of enabling factors such as strategic planning in creating a beneficial learning environment. However, in the local context, there seems to be an incongruence in resource support regarding time and workforce. The participants (Alexia, Gail, Whitney, Doreen, Oliver, and Max) in this study recounted their practical challenges in delivering effective career guidance services that could also impinge on integrating principles of green guidance in a practical and tangible manner. Alexia, Whitney, and Max underscored the issue of limited human resources within career guidance in the context of large colleges and schools, leading to an increased workload for practitioners. This signifies that

time could also be an issue, given the large amount of work that needs to be carried out by a limited number of persons. Gail added that practices offered in prior years could not be provided in the current year due to a shortage of resources. She explained how time is one constraint that continually limits career guidance work, stating that *“sometimes, I mean, we try and limit the sessions because of obviously lack of resources, as always, time being one of them.”* This recurring challenge hinders effective career guidance and raises questions about its potential impact on students’ career guidance experiences. It is vital to acknowledge that these ongoing limitations could affect the quality and effectiveness of career guidance services. They may impact students’ readiness for future careers and life decisions, especially in gaining awareness and knowledge of sustainable career paths. Thus, while career guidance practitioners aim to engage students, they must also ensure adequate resources support their efforts. This balance underscores the need for institutions to invest in resources that promote student engagement and align with their long-term career goals. Additionally, the shortage of resources might force career advisors to prioritise specific industries or areas over others due to a lack of tools and resources to support their service, potentially compromising impartiality. The latter concern is discussed in the upcoming section.

#### *4.3.5 Constraining factor: Impartiality*

A growing focus on sustainability urges practitioners to guide career choices that promote sustainability (Plant, 2015) through green career guidance, which considers the environmental impact of career choices (Plant, 2021). Nonetheless, in pursuing sustainable career guidance, it is essential to highlight the environmental aspects and

maintain impartiality throughout the process. Impartiality in career guidance ensures that individuals receive equal and unbiased support as they explore and make decisions about their career paths (Sultana, 2018). This impartial approach is crucial to guarantee that every individual's unique needs and aspirations are considered without unnecessary influence, ensuring a fair and equitable career guidance experience. Three of the 10 participants in this dissertation (Alexia, Whitney, and Oliver) mentioned the matter of impartiality. Alexia acknowledged the need for impartiality in career guidance interventions with regard to emerging careers. Currently, these depend on requests by subject departments within the school.

Alexia on requested career guidance interventions by staff members: *We're an add-on. Jekk tiġi tal-\* [refers to a specific school club] u tgħidli, 'Tista' tiġi biex tkellimhom fuq sustainability li huwa related ma' careers?' We do it. Imma m'iniex sejra jien. Tgħidli għala? Ghax, you have to be impartial. Jigifieri jekk jiena ha nagħmel fuq din, imbagħad ha jġini tal-\* [refers to a specific school subject], jgħidli, 'Għalfejn mhux qed tiffukali fuq \* [refers to a specific industry] ghax it's an industry'. So, we have to be very careful since we're in an educational institution.*

Alexia on requested career guidance interventions by staff members: *We're an add-on. If the -\* [refers to a specific school club] tells me, 'Can you come to talk to them about sustainability related to careers?' We do it. However, it's not going to be me who approaches them. Why? Because you have to be impartial. So, if I do this, then I'll have to accommodate the \* [refers to a specific school subject] who will ask me why I'm not focusing on \* [refers to a specific industry] because it's an industry. So, we have to be very careful since we're in an educational institution.*

Several factors warrant consideration in this context, with a primary focus on time and the allocation of human resources for conducting these sessions in addition to everyday responsibilities. The fear of potential conflicts of interest, as indicated by Alexia, can be alleviated by engaging in teamwork in the school setting and devising a practical educational plan. However, Alexia's disclosure prompts consideration regarding the potentially missed opportunities for students when leaving these

interventions to chance. It could also restrict exposure to environmental or sustainability career paths for those students who do not consider this area. To address the issue of impartiality in green career guidance, Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023) presented a structured method that allows practitioners to address the pressing climate crisis without imposing personal agendas on clients through “clarifying, exploring, evaluating, and action planning”.

Consequently, the importance of impartiality in career guidance cannot be overstated, as it is the cornerstone of providing equal and unbiased support to individuals seeking guidance in their career choices. Therefore, Alexia’s concern about impartiality is well-founded, complementing the literature’s emphasis on avoiding biases in career guidance. It is essential to understand that the primary responsibility of career advisors is not to impose their viewpoints on individuals but to empower clients to make well-informed career decisions. Career advisors are not meant to dictate individuals’ thoughts or life choices but rather empower clients to make informed career decisions. Thus, the challenge lies in proactively integrating impartial career guidance into educational institutions, ensuring students do not miss valuable opportunities. Parallel to Alexia, Whitney and Oliver echoed the literature’s perspective on impartiality, whereby Whitney emphasised the role of career advice in guiding, not deciding, for students, underlining the importance of allowing students to make informed decisions.

Whitney on impartiality in career guidance: *Aħna ma nistgħux nipromovu ċertu karrieri iżjed minn oħrajn, ma nistgħux niddeċiedu għalihom, aħna parir nistgħu*

Whitney on impartiality in career guidance: We cannot promote particular careers more than others; we cannot decide for them; we can only guide

*naghtu hom; mhux inġegħluhom jieħdu d-deċiżjonijiet għax fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, id-deċiżjoni hija tal-istudent.*

them because, in the end, it is the student's decision.

Similarly, Oliver stressed the role of awareness-building in career guidance, with a clear commitment to not forcing career choices onto students.

Oliver on impartiality in career guidance: *Tgħinhom janalizzaw an actual career fejn tista' twassalhom, jew aħjar magħhom tanalizza l-goals li għandhom...It's not ethical illi jiena ha noqgħod inġieghlu.*

Oliver on impartiality in career guidance: You help them analyse where an actual career can lead to, or even better, analyse the goals they have...It's not ethical for me to try to force it.

A contrasting perspective was offered by Gail, who asserted that

*As a citizen, I also feel that it's my duty when I meet students who, when it comes to careers, may not be paying attention to the environment and or sustainability. I also feel like it is kind of my duty to point out, 'Listen, there are other ways you do this thing'. (Gail)*

Gail and Oliver's approaches can be said to correspond to Hooley's (2022b) approach, as outlined above, which allows practitioners to address pressing issues like climate change without imposing their personal agendas on the client. This involves clarifying concerns related to the environment, exploring options, evaluating choices, and creating action plans. By listening to and exploring clients' aspirations, career guidance practitioners can support strategies for a way forward in the client's career planning journey, all while maintaining impartiality.

Nonetheless, in pursuing impartiality in career guidance, it is imperative to recognise the potential biases that may influence eco-friendly career guidance strategies.

Despite their commendable intentions, these approaches can inadvertently reflect biases or assumptions about prioritising environmental concerns in one's career

choices. The unintended consequence may be a preference for industries or more environmentally friendly roles, leading to a potentially distorted view of sustainability within career decisions.

Notwithstanding, the quest for impartiality in career guidance has its challenges. Inherent biases within educational institutions and societal norms can significantly influence the career guidance process, sometimes steering students towards or away from particular career paths based on factors beyond their individual aspirations and aptitudes. Moreover, limited resources and time constraints within educational institutions can hinder the comprehensive implementation of impartial career guidance, rendering it a complex undertaking. Max voiced this concern.

Max on bias within career guidance:  
*Kultant aħna bħala career practitioners, jekk ma naħsbux, nibża' li nkunu qed naqdu vuċi ta' xi ħadd; hekk nibża'. Jiena, I question, jiġifieri careers, l-interest ta' min hu? I think a lot, fl-interest ta' min qed naħdem?*

Max on bias within career guidance: As career practitioners, sometimes, I feel that if we don't think, we would be enacting someone else's intentions; that's what I fear. I question, in terms of careers, whose interests are we serving? I reflect a lot about whose interests we are working for.

In light of these intricacies, career guidance practitioners must prioritise impartiality, particularly in the context of green career guidance. Providing each student with unbiased support as they explore career options is essential, maintaining a balance between promoting sustainability and impartiality. However, this is challenging when considering potential biases influenced by societal norms and resource constraints within educational institutions. In ensuring impartiality in career guidance, it becomes evident that comprehensive training is a critical need for career guidance practitioners. Training equips them with the knowledge and skills required

to recognise and address biases and provide guidance that genuinely serves the best interests of students. This subtheme is discussed in the upcoming section.

#### *4.3.6 Suggested strategy: Training*

Irving and Malik-Liévano (2019) focused on broadening career discussions towards eco-justice and applying a proactive approach to address climate change. While these authors stress the importance of integrating sustainability into career guidance, a significant obstacle that must be addressed is the need for proper training. Pirzada et al. (2023) found that their participants faced challenges when incorporating sustainability into education without proper training and knowledge. Similarly, in Europe, many educators promote sustainability based on personal values but seek additional training and support (European Commission, 2022b). Similarities in participants who, out of their sense of duty, promote and are proactive in cultivating sustainable values, but the need for further training was reverberated by several participants. While Alexia expressed willingness to integrate sustainability-related guidance, the participant raised concerns about a lack of content and procedural knowledge.

Amid the climate change crisis, McMahon (CICA, 2023d) asserted that career guidance professionals cannot afford to remain inactive; instead, they must proactively participate and adjust to this evolving environment. One way of doing this is through professional development. The participants in this discussion collectively highlighted the importance of training and education in green careers and sustainable practices. Pamela, Vivianne, Oliver, Max, and Nathalie expressed their

desire for higher-level training to enhance their ability to educate and guide others in this area. *“I have interest, but I can’t really teach it properly if I’m not equipped”* (Pamela). Vivianne claimed she *“would definitely need training. I can read, but when I read, I’m a bit all over the place, so I would need training”*.

Moreover, Alexia, Gail, and Miriam stressed the ongoing need for training to stay abreast of evolving opportunities in green careers and its indispensable role in green guidance. *“Maybe we don’t know about the opportunities out there, so how can we guide students towards these jobs? We need to keep ourselves up to date and know what’s out there to inform our students about it”* (Gail). The necessity for a personal and institutional mindset shift, which could be facilitated through continuous professional development and external expertise, was stressed by Doreen. She also underscored the importance of self-reflection and mindset change among career guidance practitioners, suggesting that this transformation can be facilitated through continuing professional development. *“L-ewwel irrid nieħu l-ghodda”* [First, I need to be equipped] (Doreen on integrating green guidance).

Conversely, Whitney exhibited an interest in training but expressed scepticism due to the limited national presence of tangible sustainable practices. Furthermore, Pamela, Vivianne, Max, and Nathalie highlighted the challenge of accessing training, often hindered by scheduling constraints and limited human resources. In agreement, the participants underscored the pressing need for comprehensive training and education in green careers and sustainable practices to effectively guide students in making informed career choices. As highlighted by the participants, the limited access to training and education points to a critical need for engaging resources and tools in

green career guidance. The following section explores how such assets, specifically designed for green career guidance, can help bridge the gap and assist practitioners in delivering thorough and equitable guidance to students.

#### *4.3.7 Suggested strategy: Engaging tools*

Despite the presence of guiding documents such as the *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007), *A National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF)* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), and the *Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools* (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020), the local landscape lacks specific materials and resources for guiding career guidance practitioners towards green guidance.

To address this absence, I needed first to understand what career guidance practitioners needed to be able to incorporate green guidance principles into their methods. Participants were asked about the kind of resources they would find effective in addressing sustainability. They offered valuable insights into this matter, whereby Alexia advocated for the effectiveness of organising themed fairs, themed job weeks, and specific events dedicated to sustainable careers. According to Alexia, these gatherings facilitate valuable interactions between students and employers in green industries, promoting knowledge sharing. Pamela brought attention to the crucial role of workshops in promoting sustainability within the context of career guidance and the need for a comprehensive review of global practices to gauge their effectiveness. Pamela also stressed the significance of inviting professionals to

conduct workshop sessions with students while highlighting the importance of evaluating such sessions to identify areas for improvement.

Moreover, she claimed that experiential, unique, and unconventional workshop formats can ignite students' interest and engage them more. Gail and Miriam highlighted the importance of industry engagement. They both proposed organised visits to industries that offer green job opportunities, facilitating collaboration and exposure to green employment fields and sustainability practices within workplace settings. This would also apply to career guidance practitioners.

Miriam on engaging with the industry:

*Li ġġib xi persuni li jkunu diġà qegħdin f'xogħlijiet jew karrieri li forsi l-istudenti ma tantx jaħsbu dwarhom, jekk semmejna green jobs, pereżempju...Illi jieħdu perspettiva differenti illi mhux dejjem ha mmorru għall-istess xogħlijiet.*

Miriam on engaging with the industry:

To invite individuals already working in jobs or careers that students might not have considered, such as green jobs, for example...To give them a different perspective that doesn't always lead to the same jobs.

Additionally, Pamela, Vivianne, Gail, and Miriam suggested the use of videos featuring individuals in related green jobs as a compelling means to offer real-world examples of green employment, enriching students' understanding.

Regarding resources and tools for supporting green guidance, Alexia recommended the provision of toolkits containing relevant information and guidance on green careers and sustainability. She also suggested offering links to online resources and databases where information about green job opportunities and educational pathways can be accessed. Furthermore, Alexia proposed sharing best practices from successful green guidance programmes and initiatives, offering valuable insights.

These suggestions indicate the need for a versatile approach, encompassing

workshops, industry involvement, visual materials, and supportive tools to enhance the effectiveness of career guidance in promoting sustainability.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter explored the context of career guidance practices in Maltese state secondary schools, with a specific emphasis on enhancing the integration of green guidance. An in-depth analysis of current practices and the identification of constraining factors revealed a number of pressing needs that must be addressed to enhance the role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools. These include enhancing awareness and knowledge about sustainability and green guidance, resistance, lack of human and time resources, and impartiality concerns. A particular concern mentioned was that there is already resistance to discussing careers, making it even more challenging to incorporate sustainability into them.

Green guidance initiatives exist as an incidental occurrence. Thus, it is not all bleak in this area; however, given students' resistance to tackle sustainability even through career choices, it is evident that more needs to be done. The significance of empowerment as a pivotal driver for effective career guidance has been underscored, emphasising the imperative of adopting a holistic and inclusive approach to guide students towards sustainable career paths. The proposed strategies, encompassing comprehensive training and engaging tools, play a vital role in bridging the existing gaps and equipping career guidance practitioners with the essential tools and knowledge required to embrace green guidance. Additionally, participants in this study have underscored the necessity for resources to support them in the integration

of green guidance in their practice. These findings and analyses lay the foundation for the conclusions and recommendations presented in this dissertation.

## 5 Conclusion

The significance of this research has shed light on crucial aspects of career guidance within local secondary schools and the potential for enhancing it through the lens of green career guidance. This dissertation primarily focused on examining the role of career guidance in Maltese government secondary schools, particularly in the context of green guidance. The dissertation's foundation is built upon a literature review examining the intersection of climate change, sustainability, and the role of career guidance. It also delved into Maltese environmental policies and educational efforts in this regard. The research questions sought to understand strategies, benefits, and challenges for career guidance practitioners in incorporating green principles within their practices.

Gathering participants' insights and experiences to consider potential gaps and opportunities related to integrating environmental sustainability into career decision-making was essential. The research approach to accomplish this included 10 semi-structured interviews with relevant professionals (career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers) assigned career guidance responsibilities within different Maltese state secondary schools. The presented findings were then analysed to gauge the current state of career guidance practices in Maltese state secondary schools concentrating on green guidance.

The findings underscored critical needs in career guidance within Maltese state secondary schools. Specifically, challenges such as enhancing sustainability awareness, overcoming resistance to career discussions among students, and

addressing resource limitations and impartiality concerns were prominently identified. Developing comprehensive educational programmes that integrate sustainability principles into the curriculum is essential. This ensures that students not only grasp environmental challenges but are also equipped with the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding sustainable career paths.

Insights from the participants indicated that elements of environmental education and sustainability matters are covered in various subjects. However, the widespread neglect of even simple, sustainable practices within several schools poses a barrier for students to recognise the importance and necessity of adopting a mindset rooted in sustainable values. Consequently, it is evident that more efforts are required at a societal level to ingrain this fundamental value into our daily lives. Only when sustainability becomes second nature can we effectively address it through careers. Currently, the foundational building block is noticeably absent.

Additionally, given that some participants highlighted resistance among their students to engage in career discussions, this signals a significant issue for career guidance. If students are hesitant to discuss careers, it is difficult for them to plan their future, let alone think about sustainable career paths. This situation necessitates a thorough evaluation of career guidance, exploring ways to make it more appealing and pertinent to young individuals and ensuring they are receptive to this essential service in their lives.

Empowerment emerged as a critical driver for effective career guidance, emphasising the need for a holistic and inclusive approach to guide students towards sustainable

career paths. Additionally, tailoring career guidance to meet each student's distinctive needs fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility in their career development, reinforcing the idea that students are active participants in shaping their own future. This approach was evident among study participants who engaged in indirect green guidance, primarily driven by personal initiative. This is promising for preparing students for opportunities in the green economy, as taking the lead can position them for leadership roles and contribute to positive change. Some participants highlighted school clubs and initiatives that offer such leadership chances. However, due to time constraints, these opportunities are limited, mainly driven by voluntary efforts from staff members. This stresses the significance of cultivating a nurturing and inclusive school environment to empower more students not only to assume leadership roles but also to find motivation in learning and actively engage in their career development journey. This approach aims to change how students perceive career dialogue, making it less of a burden or a boring subject.

However, a significant lacuna was identified, indicating that while participants were willing and, in some cases, already taking steps towards green guidance, revealing a spectrum of sustainability practices among participants, basic implementations and sustainability practices are not consistently maintained. These findings reflect the need for a paradigm shift towards embedded sustainability mindsets and values. Overcoming an ingrained mindset presents a formidable challenge (Sultana, 2017b), as it necessitates a fundamental shift in thinking. However, this shift is vital, not only in the context of careers but also as a broader societal transformation. It fosters a mindset that extends beyond the mere enforcement of eco-friendly practices.

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognise that sustainability through careers represents only one element of a broader transformation.

An intriguing disparity emerged between the high level of sustainability consciousness among young Maltese students, as indicated by PISA 2018 (OECD, 2020), and the findings of this study, which raised questions about the local students' materialistic values, as noted by most participants. Furthermore, this research underscored the importance of well-informed practitioners who can be equipped through training, highlighting the link between knowledge and the objective of green career guidance. The constraints encountered by the participants, including resistance to career discussions from students, necessitate reflection on the strategies employed. Additionally, the availability of resources, such as time, people, and tools, plays a pivotal role in shaping the success of green career guidance initiatives within local state secondary schools. It stressed the importance of well-informed practitioners and identified constraints such as resistance to career discussions and resource availability. Proposed strategies, including comprehensive training and tools, aim to bridge existing gaps and equip career guidance practitioners with the knowledge needed for green guidance. The insights derived from the findings shed light on the current state of career guidance and form the basis for the transformative recommendations outlined in the conclusion.

## **5.1 Key strengths of the dissertation**

One of the main strengths of this dissertation is that it deals with a crucial and timely subject by concentrating on the integration of career guidance and ecological

sustainability. It underscores the importance of improving career guidance by incorporating the principles of green career guidance, a highly relevant perspective in light of the increasing global emphasis on sustainability. This is supported by a comprehensive literature review that examines the connection between climate change, sustainability, and the role of career guidance, providing a solid theoretical background for the study.

The research includes empirical inquiry through the administration of 10 semi-structured interviews with practitioners engaged in career guidance roles within Maltese state secondary schools. This qualitative method enables a more profound comprehension of the existing state of career guidance practices and how well they conform to eco-friendly principles. Through these interviews, it was possible to identify critical challenges and opportunities related to integrating environmental sustainability into career decision-making. This made it possible to identify gaps and inform recommendations presented later in this chapter. Insights towards the vital need for training practitioners to improve the effectiveness of career guidance programmes and the acknowledgement of resource constraints are such examples. Additionally, my background of 20 years in teaching PSCD and conducting guidance duties provided an insider's perspective on the dynamics and processes within schools. This supported my deep understanding of the practical challenges in career guidance within the educational system.

## 5.2 Dissertation limitations

Every research undertaking inherently possesses limitations, and it is essential for the researcher to conscientiously address these limitations and their significant impact on the research's outcomes (Broder & Sumerson, 2013). In this context, one study shortcoming falls on the sample comprising 10 career guidance professionals in Maltese state secondary schools. This relatively small sample size may limit the generalisability of the findings, even though this was not the aim. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the experiences and perspectives of these participants might not represent the entire population of career guidance practitioners in the local scenario. While this research was centred on Maltese state secondary schools, it is crucial to recognise that the findings may not directly apply to diverse cultural or educational contexts, including other types of secondary educational institutions within the Maltese context.

As explained earlier, my professional background provided valuable insights into career guidance within local educational settings. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this background may introduce some potential for bias or influence the interpretation of the results. To mitigate this, I took deliberate measures to maintain an objective perspective throughout the research process, such as developing a set of predefined questions and follow-up prompts for interviews, ensuring that all participants were asked the same questions. This was done to avoid the potential limitation of interviewer bias so that all the participants were subjected to the same structured and consistent interview process. Thus, I made a concerted effort to maintain an objective perspective throughout the research development.

### 5.3 Implications for practice

This final section concentrates on the recommendations stemming from the findings presented in this dissertation. They are informed by the insights gathered from the research and are intended to offer guidance for addressing the identified issues and challenges. These actionable suggestions provide a roadmap for individuals, organisations, and policymakers seeking to apply the research outcomes in real-world scenarios.

#### *5.3.1 Redefining local career guidance in educational settings*

Based on the literature review and subsequent analysis of this dissertation's findings, it is evident that adapting career guidance to the changing world of work, particularly in light of climate change implications, necessitates a redefinition of its practices. Key elements to enhance the effectiveness of career guidance while incorporating green guidance principles have been identified.

Given the noted resistance to career guidance discussions among students, as highlighted by various participants, it is essential to prioritise student engagement in this area. This initial step is crucial for incorporating sustainability into career choices. However, such integration can only occur if students actively participate. Therefore, practitioners must reflect on their current approaches to career guidance, acquiring knowledge about climate change and its intersection with career choices to incorporate green guidance principles effectively.

The resistance to career guidance discussions among students is a complex challenge. Inadequate exposure to sustainability-oriented career guidance can lead to uninformed career choices and misalignment with the evolving job market. This unpreparedness may result in an unresponsive workforce, perpetuating unsustainable practices across industries and worsening the impact of climate change. Thus, redefining career guidance to incorporate green guidance principles, as advocated by Irving (2014) and Plant (2015), can offer numerous benefits. This approach enhances student engagement and comprehension of sustainability principles and promotes more informed and sustainable career decisions. Empowering students to address climate change through conscientious career choices actively provides a sense of purpose and contributes directly to mitigating this pressing global challenge. Failing to engage and empower students in this effort risks hindering the transition to a green economy and exacerbating climate change issues.

### *5.3.2 Advancing continuous professional development*

Amid uncertain career transformations, updating career practitioner skills enhances user experiences (Cedefop, 2021). All the participants in this study strongly highlighted training needs regarding the area of green guidance. To address this vital need, continuous learning among career guidance practitioners can be promoted through a number of approaches that may include conferences, in-person and online workshops, and industry events related to sustainability integration in career guidance to bolster their professional development. Such events can cover the latest trends in sustainability, eco-justice, and green career opportunities. Collaborating with experts in the field of sustainability incorporation in careers can provide insights

and experiences valuable to the career guidance process. These can be integrated into themed fairs, job weeks, and specific events dedicated to sustainable careers, bringing students and employers together for interactions and knowledge sharing.

Implementing continuous professional development for career guidance practitioners offers several benefits. It ensures that career guidance practitioners stay current with the latest sustainability trends and related emerging career opportunities. Such knowledge enriches the quality of career guidance provided to individuals seeking environmentally and socially responsible career paths, contributing to developing a more sustainable workforce and society.

Moreover, the local Master's programme for Lifelong Career Guidance and Development can consider adding components that incorporate green guidance, ensuring that future certified practitioners acquire essential knowledge in the career guidance field. This integration can be achieved through practical study units, allowing students to explore career opportunities and apply sustainable principles. This learning approach equips future certified practitioners with the necessary skills to guide individuals towards environmentally and socially responsible career choices.

Additionally, establishing a platform or network for career guidance practitioners to share resources, best practices, and training materials related to green careers can promote knowledge sharing among local career guidance practitioners within educational settings. This can include a library of videos featuring individuals in green jobs to offer real-world examples, enriching understanding of sustainability

within various career options. These videos can be shared via social media and other mediums to facilitate access to different individuals.

### *5.3.3 Uncovering green guidance – A practical manual for career guidance practitioners*

At the heart of this dissertation is the creation of a complementary manual, *Uncovering Green Guidance – A Practical Manual for Career Guidance Practitioners*. It is designed for career guidance practitioners in secondary school settings in response to the participants' expressed need for knowledge and resources. This manual serves as a centralised resource collection that facilitates understanding key sustainability concepts and terminology. It is crucial in transforming how we approach environmentally conscious career education in secondary schools without being too formal or lengthy. The manual bridges the gap by including specific learning outcomes and objectives from pertinent sources (*Career Guidance Policy for Schools*, *A National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF)*, and the *Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools*) to fit seamlessly within the local educational system. It takes on a central role, serving as a foundation for the shift towards green guidance, sparking a new way for career guidance practitioners to think about sustainability in secondary schools. The evolving role of career guidance practitioners becomes a focal point in this narrative. The manual's structure is both structured and flexible, which is crucial for practitioners who want to adapt green guidance practices to the unique circumstances within secondary schools.

#### *5.3.4 Green guidance implementation insights*

Incorporating green guidance in Maltese secondary schools is crucial for increasing sustainability. Key elements essential for its successful implementation include creating a supportive environment and ensuring adequate resources. Establishing a supportive environment within local secondary schools is pivotal. The shortage of human resources, a commonly highlighted issue among participants, may hinder career guidance services. Thus, engaging competent individuals to address this issue is imperative, ensuring these services can fulfil their roles effectively and integrate new initiatives, such as green guidance, while providing professional development opportunities.

These implications extend to policies at various levels, from educational institutions to governments. Human resources must be allocated effectively, particularly in large colleges and schools. Collaborative frameworks should be explored to address resource limitations, enabling strategic resource provision for career guidance. This prioritises student engagement and long-term career goals, addressing the ever-changing labour market needs in the face of climate change. This recommendation renders sustainability an integral part of students' career choices and contributes to the country's sustainable economic growth in the long term. Furthermore, it can serve as a model for other educational systems and institutions, inspiring wider adoption of sustainable educational career guidance practices.

### 5.3.5 Future research

In future studies, several crucial avenues for research emerge, and this section focuses on exploring potential research directions and strategies within the Maltese context. This study has concentrated on the perspectives and viewpoints of local career guidance practitioners in state secondary schools. Therefore, a valuable comparative study would involve students as the focus group to assess their knowledge, values, and motivations in the area of climate change and sustainability. By exploring these areas, a more comprehensive perspective can be gained, and this data will be instrumental in developing more effective engagement strategies to better support students in their career decisions. Conducting such a study at the local level would be most beneficial as this ensures that the findings are directly applicable to the specific Maltese context. This local focus is vital because it considers the cultural, social, and economic factors that can significantly influence the effectiveness of career guidance programmes within a Maltese context.

Relevant to the Maltese context is the local *Occupational Handbook* (Jobsplus, 2018), which dates back to 2018. Therefore, creating an updated handbook that reflects the new jobs in the local job market, especially those related to sustainability, is advisable. Ideally, this should be developed and maintained as a dynamic handbook that allows for the addition of emerging job roles. This resource would serve as a valuable reference for career guidance practitioners and students. In addition, such an update would also address outdated resource challenges.

The study's sample consisted of 10 participants from a specific context: state secondary schools. To enhance the study's relevance to a broader context and potentially incorporate a quantitative approach, a more diverse sample, including participants from different types of educational institutions, should be considered in future research. It is vital to recognise that each college in Malta has its unique realities, needs, and challenges, and future research can help identify these and propose contextualised solutions.

#### **5.4 Final thoughts and reflections**

In conclusion, this study has significantly contributed to understanding career guidance within local secondary schools, specifically in the context of green career guidance. It revealed how integrating environmental sustainability into career decision-making can lead to empowerment and involvement among young students. It also exposes the existing gaps in sustainability practices and the need for a fundamental shift in values and mindsets that are the foundation for developing a green approach towards sustainable career selections. While this research did not aim for generalisation, it provides unique insights into the Maltese context and serves as a starting point towards a more environmentally conscious approach to local career guidance at the secondary school level. It offers a new perspective on green career guidance and suggests re-evaluating existing practices to integrate environmental sustainability. This also involves the continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the engagement tools and training programmes that should be based on feedback from career guidance practitioners and students. The insights gained from this feedback will serve as a valuable resource for making necessary improvements. This research

represents an initiating step towards a more environmentally conscious and sustainable approach to local career guidance at the secondary school level. It paves the way for a future where students are well-prepared for their careers and equipped with the values and knowledge to contribute to a sustainable and environmentally conscious society.

## Part B: Applied strategies – A practical manual

# Uncovering green guidance



A practical manual for career  
guidance practitioners



Christabel Saliba  
November 2023

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## ***Welcome to Uncovering green guidance – A practical manual for career guidance practitioners.***

“The growing complexity of the world of work and the increasing opportunities in post-secondary education and training, demand better access to quality career education and career guidance” (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020, p. 4). In the era of the knowledge-based economy, success goes beyond mere fact and procedure memorisation, where individuals must possess the ability to critically assess the information they encounter and communicate their thoughts effectively (Thirupathy & Mustapha, 2020). This underscores the growing significance of environmental awareness in secondary education.

The role of career guidance practitioners is to support individuals in making informed decisions about their careers by exploring different career options (Cedefop, 2021). As highlighted by Tristram Hooley (Fondacija Tempus, 2023), this is particularly notable in today’s world, where the importance of green career guidance has become increasingly vital due to the rising need to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Urgent action that includes sustainability measures across various fields, such as economics, education, and climate, is imperative (United Nations, 2015b).

# **Preamble**



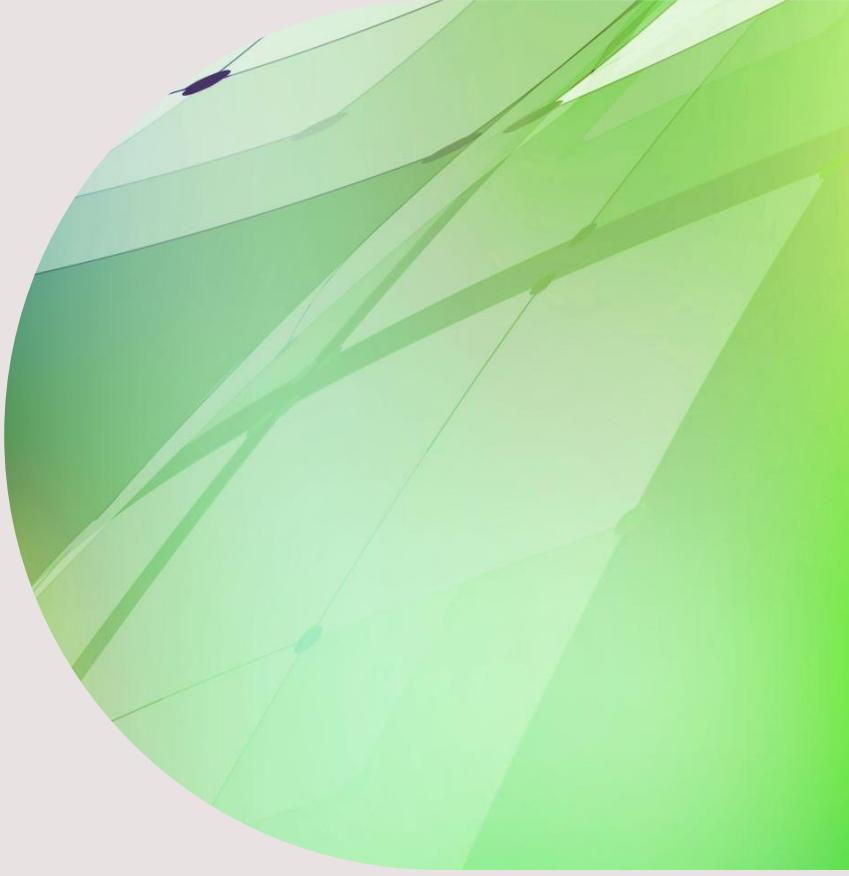


As our world faces increasing environmental challenges, career guidance practitioners have a unique role to play in helping individuals make informed and environmentally responsible career plans that support sustainability goals (Hašková, 2020). In this context, career guidance within educational contexts can support students in exploring green career options and promote the importance of sustainability in career planning. The latter refers to jobs which are essential in addressing the current environmental crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable practices.

Whether one is a novice or has some existing knowledge, this manual is designed to support career guidance professionals seeking to incorporate environmentally sustainable principles and practices into their work, i.e., green guidance. This concept and its relevance to career development in the 21st century concerns the importance of sustainability and the role of career practitioners in promoting environmentally conscious career choices (Plant, 2021).

Thus, this comprehensive document provides beneficial insights, practical tips, strategies and relevant tools to facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into career guidance services.

# Preamble



## The importance of green guidance

McMahon and Knight (CICA, 2023d) highlighted the dynamic nature of careers influenced by multiple factors, including technological advancements, globalisation, and growing awareness of climate change concerns. These factors have created a constantly evolving job market where workers must stay updated with the latest trends and skills to remain competitive and successful in their careers. In the world of new job opportunities, some green careers or jobs go hand in hand with environmental sustainability, encompassing fields such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green technology. To effectively engage in such a workforce, individuals must possess the necessary competencies, knowledge, attitudes, and principles (UNESCO, 2016).

In this context, climate change is a pressing and critical issue that requires careful consideration in career guidance, particularly within educational settings. The increasing demand for sustainable employment, the urgency to address climate change, and the potential of green careers to offer meaningful and fulfilling work underline the critical role of career guidance practitioners. Practitioners are encouraged to read the manual carefully and consider the material and strategies in their practice.

# Preamble

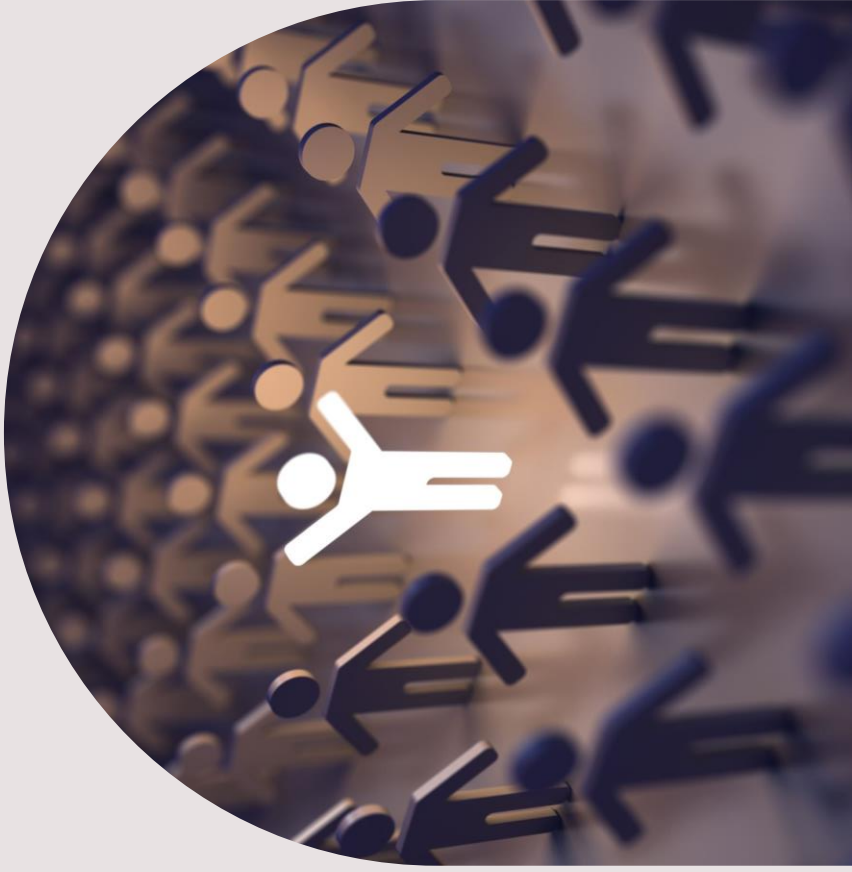
## Applying the Ubuntu approach

“The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms” (Tutu, 2011, as cited in Crippen, 2021, p. 236), which draws attention to the fact that individuals are interdependent. This quote is founded in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which has African roots and underlines the importance of the relationship between humans to attain common goals without harming others and the surrounding environment (Crippen, 2021). “I am because you are” (UNESCO, 2021), or as previously explained, *Ubuntu*, can be applied in green career guidance through a number of values that include collaboration towards sustainability through work choices.

I hope this manual is informative and helpful in your career guidance practice. Let us commence on this path towards sustainable career guidance together!



# Preamble



I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the development of this manual, primarily my supervisor, Professor Ronald Sultana, who made this practical resource possible through his feedback, guidance, and encouragement.

I would also like to thank Professor Peter Plant for his invaluable insights on the crucial topic of green career guidance.

I would also like to express appreciation to career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers who played a role in the creation of this manual through their insights and suggestions.

Special thanks are extended to Ms Lindsay Azzopardi for her generous dedication of time, patience, and valuable input. Her contributions, particularly for the case study segment in Theme 3: Green economics, have significantly enriched the creation of this resource, providing a real-world example aimed at supporting green career guidance in schools.

# Acknowledgements

## The role of career guidance



Ongoing advancements in the fields of work and education highlight the significance of reliable career guidance to promoting social inclusion and sustaining a “competitive, knowledge-based economy” (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007). This is closely linked to the need for credible and updated information on career prospects throughout one’s life (Sultana, 2004).

Career guidance practitioners must be knowledgeable about the importance of green career guidance. Moreover, they must be equipped with the necessary tools to guide and support young people in making informed educational and work choices (ILO, 2022; Khalil, 2017), particularly eco-conscious options (Hooley, 2022; Irving, 2014). This is why, as a career guidance practitioner, it is vital to not only focus on the technical aspects of a particular career path but also consider the broader employability skills necessary for success in today’s job market. Therefore, career guidance practitioners should help individuals develop a wide range of transferable skills across different industries and job roles. Nonetheless, it is equally important to consider the environmental impact of the career path and how it supports sustainable practices.

This is where the concept of a **green guidance manual** comes into play, providing guidance practitioners with a structure to effectively integrate green career guidance into their services for secondary school students.

# Rationale



## Selected cohort

Parsons (1909, as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2014) highlighted three critical components of career selection: self-awareness, familiarity with the work environment, and the ability to reason effectively about how these two sets of information are related. This perspective is particularly relevant for secondary school students during a key phase of their lives when they must begin making important decisions about their future education and career paths. Learners must cultivate “employability skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, decision making, ICT skills, teamwork, communication and co-operation skills, amongst others” (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020, p. 5). During secondary school, young people are exposed to various academic subjects, extracurricular activities, and vocational options. Thus, secondary school students need to engage in self-reflection and exploration to understand their self-concept, interests, and values to make informed decisions about their educational and occupational pursuits. At this moment in their lives, young people are developing critical thinking and decision-making skills and beginning to understand their choices’ implications (Sharf, 2013).

# Rationale



These underlying principles serve as the basis for integrating green career guidance into career guidance practices within the secondary school setting. It can be particularly useful for this cohort, whereby career guidance practitioners can assist students in academic and career choices that reinforce environmental values and contribute to sustainability. An impactful way to engage in green career guidance is by bridging the gap between education and industry, which career guidance practitioners can facilitate (Plant, 2022, as cited in NCGE, 2022a). Career guidance practitioners can work with these partners to provide students with opportunities for placements, job shadowing, or informational interviews. These experiences can give students a first-hand look at working in eco-friendly industries and help them understand the skills and knowledge needed for these careers. Such skills involve generic (core), occupation-specific (technical), and innovative competencies (ILO, 2019, 2022). This approach can help create a culture of environmental interest among young people without deeming them “responsible for solving the problems of climate change” (Barford et al., 2021, p. 13). Instead, we need to work to equip them with the knowledge and skills to become instruments of positive transformation (Leicht et al., 2018). This also ensures that the next generation of workers is prepared to meet the demands of a green economy. Overall, it represents a strategic and beneficial approach to green career guidance.

# Rationale



## Manual objectives

The main goals of the manual are outlined in this section, along with a brief overview of the foundational principles for the established objectives. Currently, the absence of resources on green career guidance at a local level highlights the need for this manual, which draws on a range of sources such as peer-reviewed journals, books, and national and international guidelines. Local guidelines, in particular, were given special attention, including the *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007), the recent *Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools* (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020), and *A National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF)* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). The set manual goals primarily stemmed from selected objectives and learning outcomes extracted from these documents.

The overarching purpose which guides the supporting manual objectives states that “Career education should give students the opportunity to: investigate opportunities in learning and work *and* understand the importance of continuing their education throughout life” (Career Guidance Taskforce, 2007, p. 47). This foundational objective was applied when referring to the school framework (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020) and the *NCF* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) to derive aims corresponding to this core goal.

# Objectives

Accordingly, as listed below, this manual's objectives were informed by selected learning outcomes projected for the Maltese secondary years cycle from the NCF (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012).

**Outcome 1: Learners who are capable of successfully developing their full potential as lifelong learners.**

*Young people who acquire personal and social skills required to handle an ever-changing social reality.*

*Young people who uphold fundamental democratic values and promote social justice (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 21).*

*Young people who are able to think critically and creatively, anticipate consequences, recognise opportunities and are risk-takers (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 22).*

**Outcome 2: Learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work.**

*Young people who are able to communicate confidently and effectively in different social contexts.*

*Young people who can use and apply a variety of digital technologies.*

*Young people who are motivated to adapt to the changing needs of society through self-evaluation and ongoing training (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 22).*

*Young people who are committed towards the improvement of their quality of life and that of others.*

*Young people who feel empowered in decision-making processes at the various levels of sustainable development (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 23).*

**Outcome 3: Learners who are engaged citizens who are able to secure social justice in constantly changing local, regional and global realities.**

*Young people who act in favour of the common good, social cohesion and social justice (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 23).*



# Objectives



Additionally, the Areas of Learning found in *Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools* (Gravina & Camilleri, 2020) were also taken into consideration when constructing this manual’s objectives, as illustrated below. The framework lists 3 learning areas, including competencies related to examining and directing one’s personal growth and development, together with learning and career exploration and management competencies. Emphasis is placed on building positive self-perception and communication skills, connecting education with aspirations, and recognising the academic impact on future options. Furthermore, the learning areas highlight the importance of critical abilities to utilise career-related information to inform career-related decisions.

Specific to the subject area of this manual, that of green career guidance, the following learning area and competence were referred to when developing the manual’s objectives:

**Area of Learning: Career exploration and management competencies**

*Develop a critical understanding of the world of work*

*Understand how work contributes to their needs and to the local and wider community.*

# Objectives

In establishing the objectives of this manual, the aims and competencies from the relevant local frameworks, as explained earlier, were used as a guide. These systems provide a clear understanding of the critical skills and knowledge that students should possess through the input of career guidance at the secondary school level. Thus, to ensure that the content is relevant and useful to local career guidance practitioners working within secondary schools, the intentions of this manual correspond to the relevant learning areas within these frameworks.

The objectives of this manual are as follows:

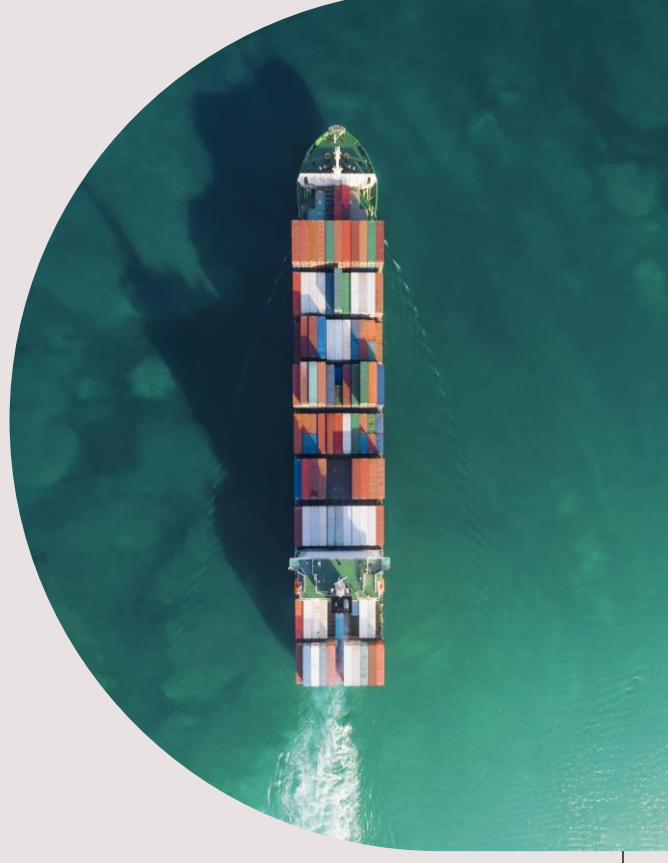
- *To provide an overview of green career guidance principles and their importance in the current global context*
- *To highlight the benefits of integrating green career guidance into career guidance services, particularly for secondary school students*
- *To offer guidance and practical strategies for career guidance practitioners to integrate green career guidance into their services for secondary school students*
- *To provide a range of resources and references for career guidance practitioners to access when developing their green career guidance services*
- *To support career guidance practitioners in fostering environmental responsibility and empowering young people to be agents of change in their future careers through guided reflections*




# Objectives

This manual can be used in various ways to fit different contexts and preferences. The primary objective is to provide information and stimulate discussions among practitioners. It can serve as a cornerstone for future training sessions and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities, enabling practitioners to work together and create resources tailored to their students by applying the provided information and suggestions. This collaborative practice offers several benefits, including enhanced customisation of resources to meet student needs and improved relationships among practitioners, fostering a sense of community and shared expertise.

Career advisors can choose to cover parts of the manual as needed or use it as a monthly awareness tool to cover the entire manual over the course of a scholastic year. The manual can also be used in different classes, with specific activities being more suitable for certain year levels; some activities may be more appropriate for a particular year group. Additionally, the manual can be used as part of small group interventions or incorporated into career weeks or expos, seminars, and orientation visits. Ultimately, the flexibility of the manual allows career guidance practitioners to tailor its use to their students' unique circumstances and needs.



# Using this manual

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single green leaf. The hand is positioned at the bottom right, with fingers gently gripping the leaf. The leaf is vibrant green with visible veins. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural setting with many other leaves. The overall tone is fresh and eco-friendly.

This section provides hands-on guidance and practical tools for career guidance practitioners to effectively integrate sustainability into their practices. This manual presents four key themes that revolve around sustainability and their impact on career guidance.

**Theme 1: Climate Change**

**Theme 2: Sustainability**

**Theme 3: Green Economics**

**Theme 4: Green Guidance**

**Practical implementation:**

*Exploring sustainability for  
effective career guidance*

These themes have been carefully designed to provide a well-rounded understanding of the intersection between sustainable practices and career development. Here is a brief introduction to each theme and its purpose:



**Theme 1: Climate change** – This theme explores the consequences of climate change on careers and employment while highlighting the necessity of recognising how climate change is reshaping industries and job prospects. This theme aims to equip career advisors with insights into the evolving job landscape driven by environmental concerns.

**Theme 2: Sustainability** – The concept of sustainability is explored through three interconnecting concepts (economic, environmental, and social), shedding light on what it means to be sustainable and its implications for career guidance. The purpose is to help practitioners understand the core principles of sustainability and integrate them into their guidance practices.

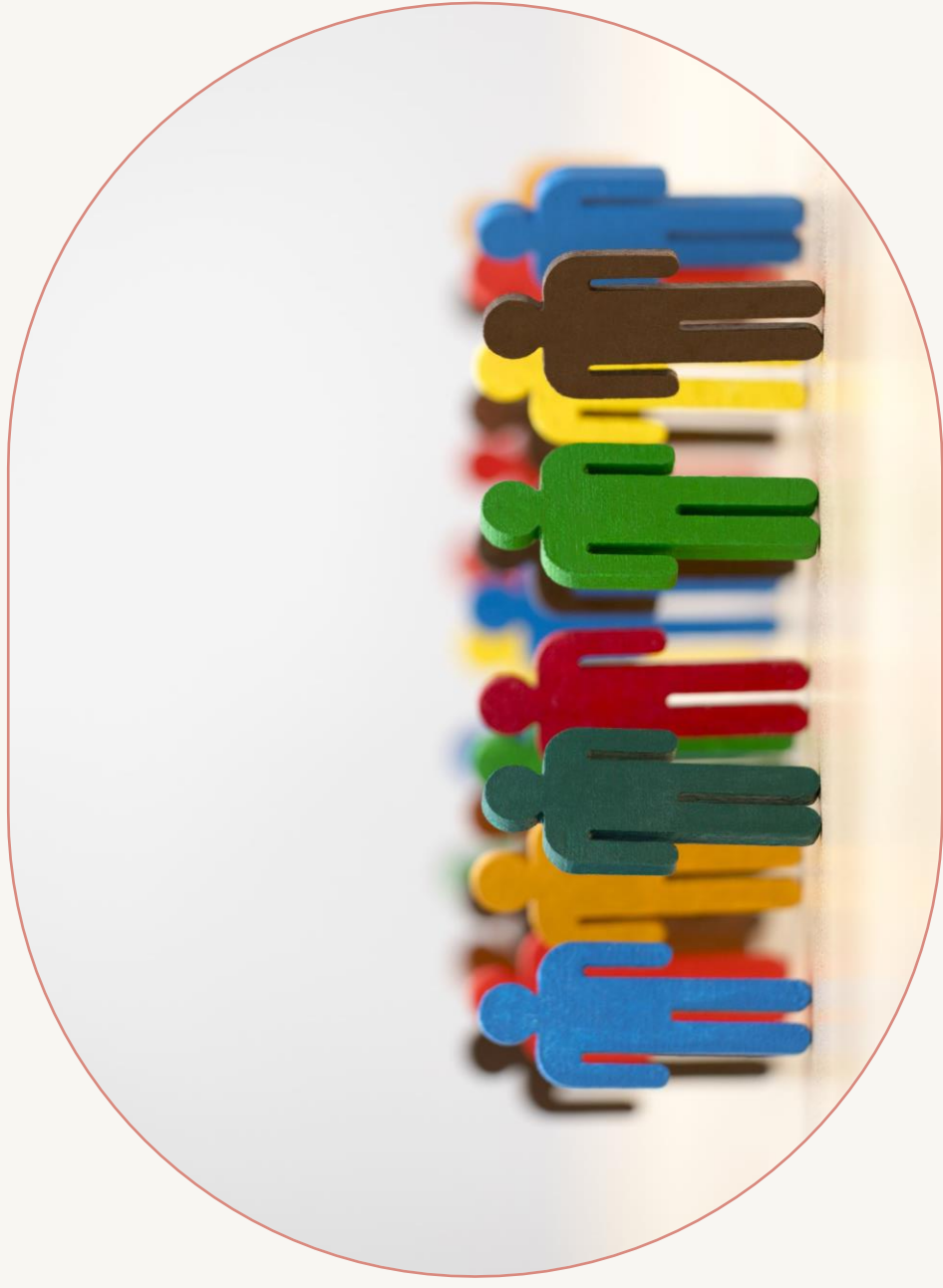
**Theme 3: Green economics** - This theme unpacks the components of a green economy, emphasising the skills required for a just transition to sustainable job opportunities. It seeks to empower career guidance practitioners with an understanding of the dynamics within a green economy and the skills necessary for individuals to thrive within it.

**Theme 4: Green guidance** – This theme unearths the practical value of green career guidance while addressing the challenges in connecting it to traditional career advice. It intends to offer practitioners strategies for providing adequate and relevant guidance to students pursuing eco-friendly careers.



Dive into comprehensive background information, valuable links, engaging activities, and reflective exercises to enhance your approach to sustainable career guidance. These resources serve as a supplementary toolkit. Additionally, suggested activities are included to engage students, which can be adapted for group or one-to-one sessions. These activities expand various skills such as climate change awareness, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, research, collaboration, leadership, and career exploration. Each section concludes with a personal reflection, fostering a culture of ongoing reflection among practitioners on the theme.

Let us hope this manual encourages continuous professional development, ensuring that career guidance practitioners remain updated and responsive to the evolving landscape of sustainable career development. The aim is to guide students towards sustainable and fulfilling career paths while addressing the pressing challenges of our time.



# Key to symbols

The following is a key for the symbols found in the *Deepen our understanding!* segments.



This symbol indicates that the adjacent text is a hyperlink leading to a reading.



This symbol indicates that the adjacent text is a hyperlink leading to a video.

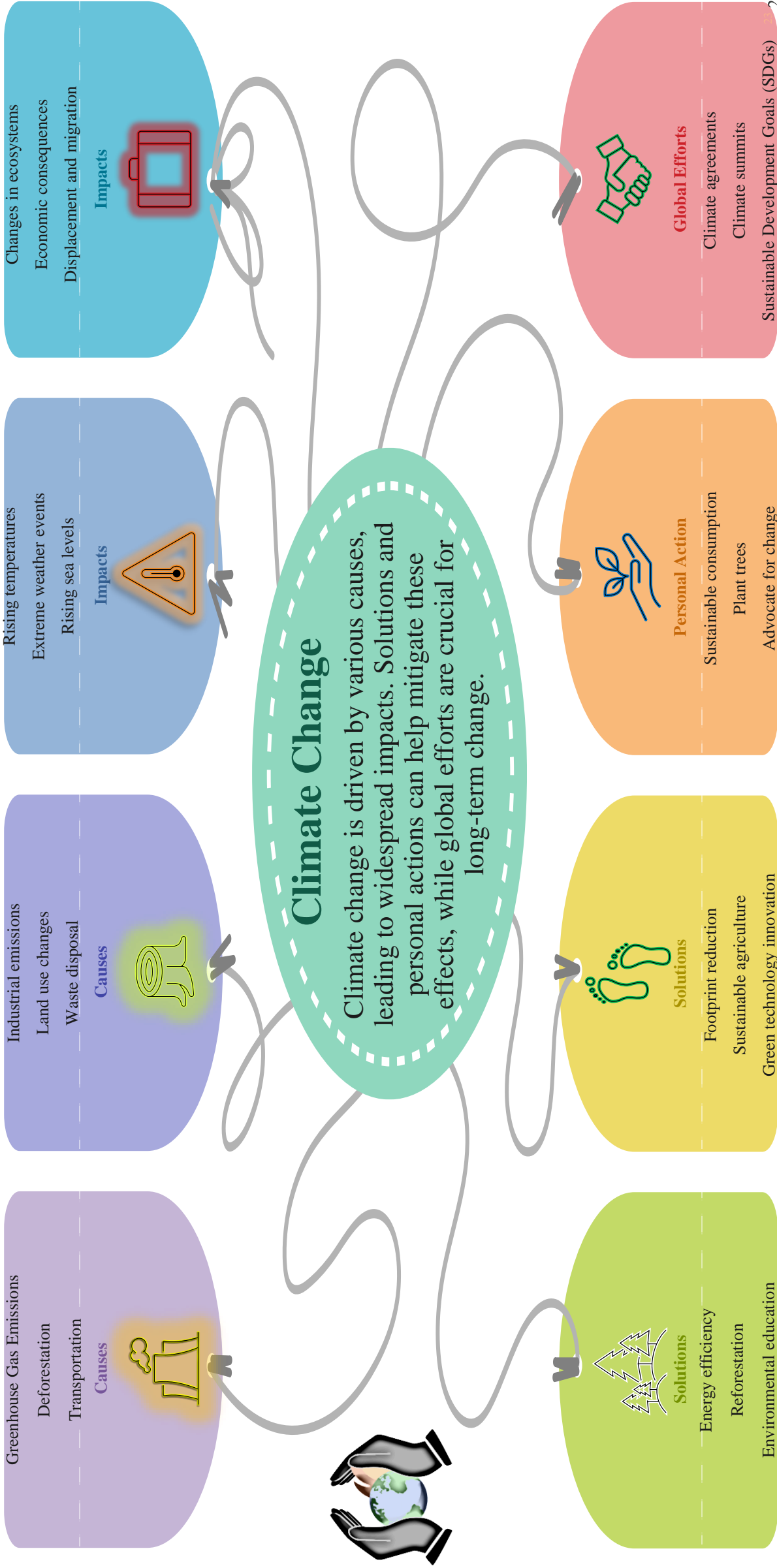
# Theme 1: Climate change

*“One of the first things that we might want to be doing as career counsellors is being aware of the reality of climate change as something that is happening and helping people to think about what that means for themselves and their careers.”*

(Hooley, 2023).



## Understanding Climate Change



# Impact of climate change on careers and employment

Climate change results in long-term shifts in temperature and atmospheric conditions, with human activities, especially burning fossil fuels, being the primary driver since the 1800s (IPCC, 2021). While climate change is often associated with rising temperatures, it is just one aspect of a complex interconnected system that can cause severe droughts, water scarcity, wildfires, sea-level rise, floods, storms, and biodiversity loss (United Nations, 2023). Lee (2022, as cited in IPCC, 2022) drew attention to these phenomena as stark reminders of the severe repercussions of inaction. Such occurrences impact various aspects of our lives, including health, food production, housing, safety, and employment, particularly affecting vulnerable populations. For instance, rising sea levels and prolonged droughts have already led to community relocations, with an expected increase in “climate refugees” in the future (United Nations, 2023).



These concerns have been the driving factors behind many global initiatives and policies to foster more environmentally friendly economies, often called the green transition. This transition set forth the drafting of vital global agreements and initiatives within the framework of green growth, including the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Notably, the Paris Agreement sets binding targets for emissions reductions, regular country evaluations, and financial support to combat climate change (United Nations Climate Change, 2023). The European Green Deal strives for carbon neutrality by 2050 by implementing sustainable changes across sectors like energy, environment, transportation, and agriculture (European Commission, 2022b). This includes the widespread adoption of eco-friendly technologies. In parallel, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development charts a strategic course for UN Member States, encompassing economic, environmental, and societal dimensions to advance sustainability by 2030. This agenda strongly emphasises sustainable economic growth and job creation (European Commission in 2022a). It is centred around the core principles of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These SDGs represent a global commitment to tackle various challenges, including education, gender equality, economic prosperity, and climate action. The aim is to pave the way towards a more equitable and environmentally conscious world (UNDP, 2023). These SDGs build upon the foundation laid by the Millennium Development Goals and seek to address previously unmet targets while fostering international cooperation for a more sustainable future (United Nations, 2015b).



Inevitably, shifting climate conditions and ecological deterioration significantly impact people's lifestyles and working patterns (ILO, 2019; Thornton et al., 2019). Careers shape our interactions with the world and evolve with changes in employment, making the climate crisis a defining issue of our times (Hooley, 2023, as cited in Fondacija Tempus, 2023). The inescapable presence of climate change also influences employment, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations (ILO, 2019; Drury & Richard, 2019). Efforts to combat climate change have increased the demand for green competencies and careers (ILO, 2022). The labour market is shifting toward greener jobs, necessitating proper education and training to address skill needs related to these changes (United Nations, 2018b; GAIN, 2017). Consequently, employees with the required competencies can navigate the labour market more effectively (Thornton et al., 2019).

In view of this context, career guidance is instrumental in addressing the impact of climate change. It can help students learn about changing job markets by identifying opportunities in green and sustainable sectors and acquiring the required skills. Additionally, career guidance can help promote environmentally responsible career choices and sustainable practices, enabling students to prepare for a more resilient and sustainable future in the face of environmental challenges.





# Keywords



Carbon  
neutrality



Career guidance



Climate change



Fossil fuels



Green transition



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals (SDGs)

# Deepen your understanding!



[2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

- *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – A plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity*



[Delivering the European Green Deal](#)

- *A series of policy measures proposed by the European Commission, with the primary objective of achieving carbon neutrality in the European Union by the year 2050*



[Do you know all 17 SDGs?](#)

- *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.*



[What is the 'Paris Agreement'?](#)

- *The international UN treaty of 2015 aims to tackle #ClimateChange head-on. Its central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with the ambition to limit the increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.*





NICEC Seminar - The environment, ethics, and careers

*The NICEC seminar focused on the problems caused by climate change and continued environmental damage.*

To solve climate emergencies, we need a just transition

*By making our work greener, we can build a better, more sustainable future for women and men worldwide. Nevertheless, getting there requires a “just transition” that is fair and provides the support workers and enterprises need to manage the many disruptions ahead.*

What is climate change?

*The significant variation of average weather conditions becoming, for example, warmer, wetter, or drier - over several decades or longer*

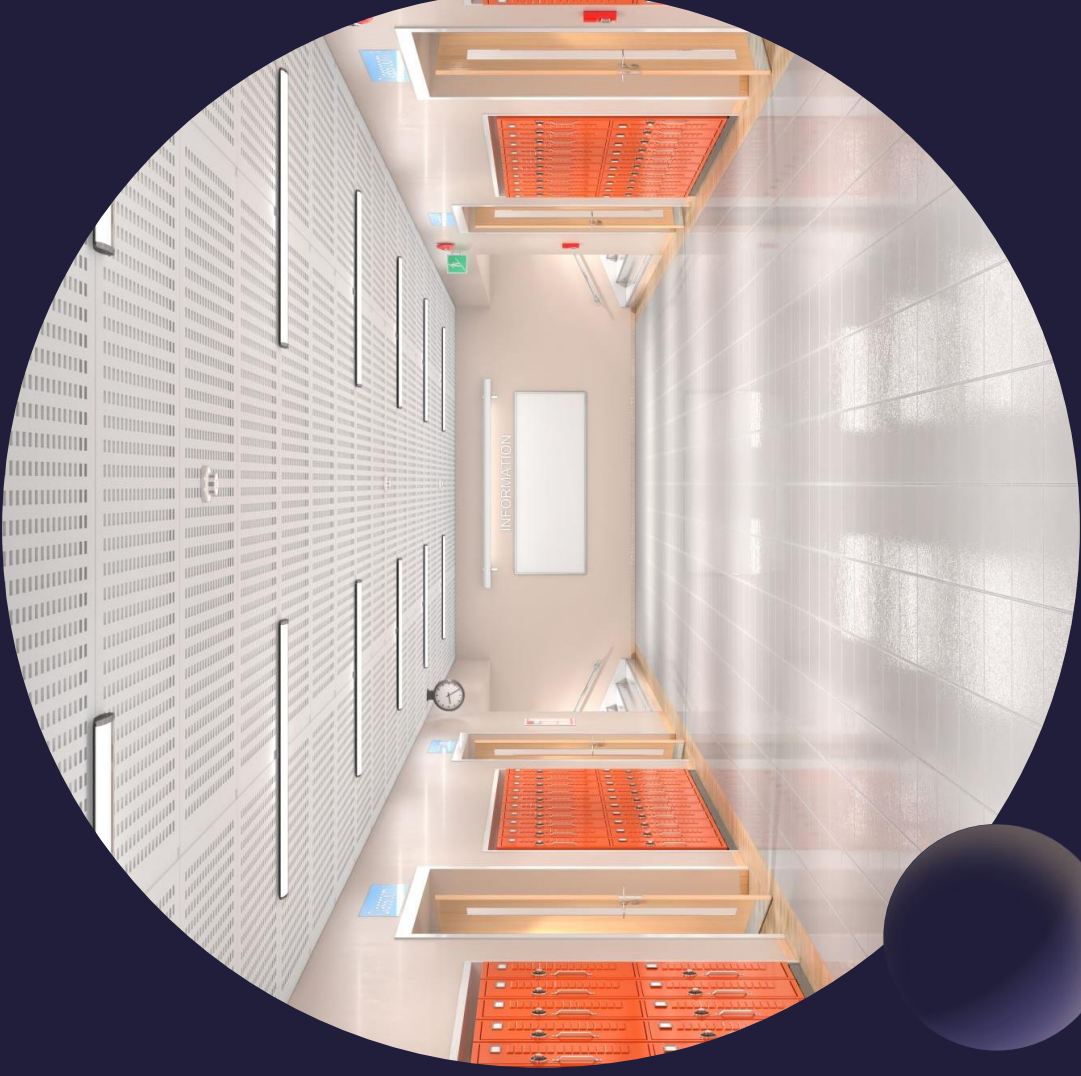


# Student engagement

Here are some strategies to actively engage students in addressing **climate change** within the context of career guidance, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge for sustainable career choices.

## Targeted key competencies

- Climate change awareness and knowledge
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking
- Knowledge sharing
- Problem-solving
- Research skills



# Suggested activity

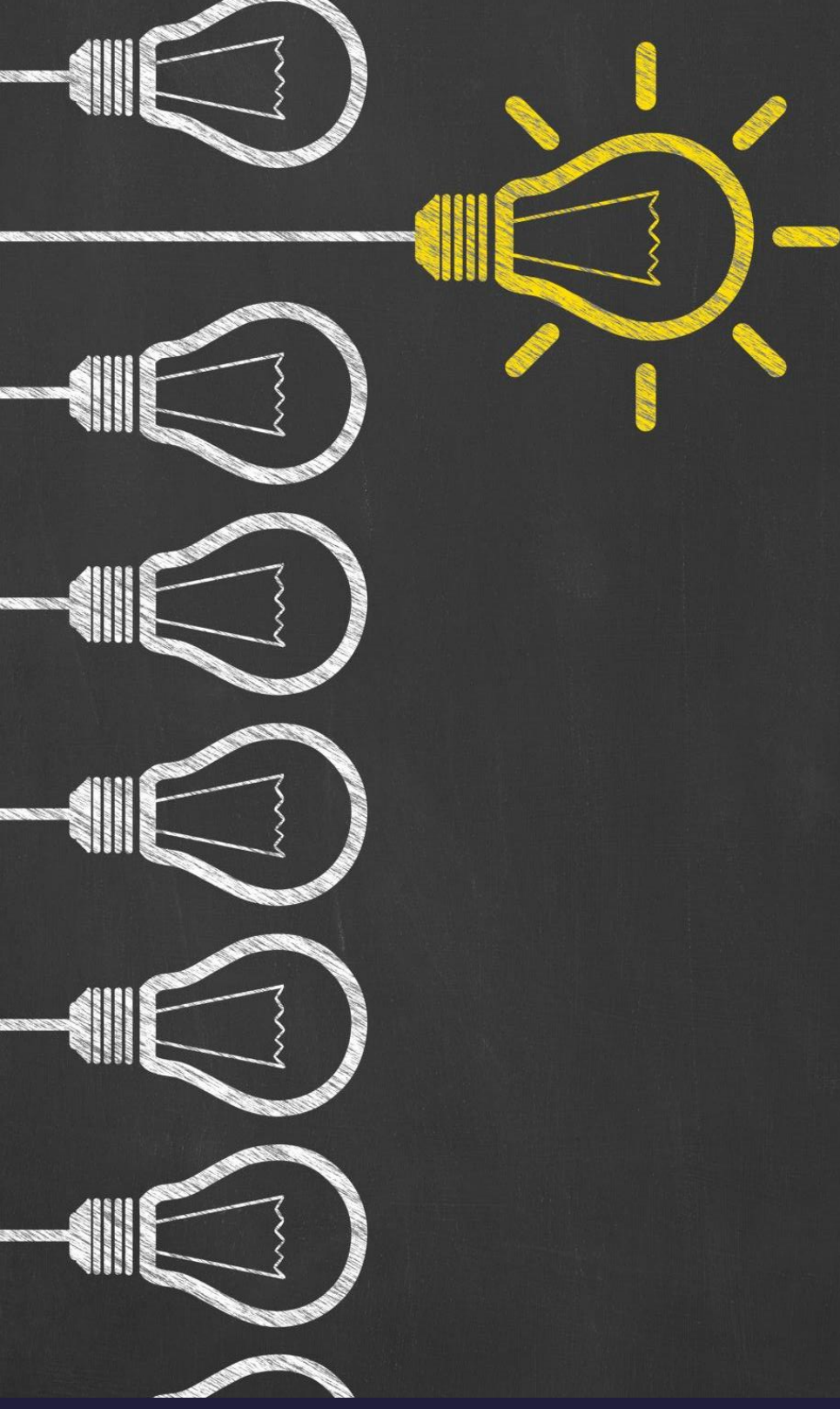
## Interactive quiz

*Goal: To enhance awareness, knowledge, and active involvement in addressing the global issue of climate change*

*Explore the causes, effects, and solutions related to climate change.*

*Highlight the significance of climate knowledge in shaping future career choices.*

*Customise the quiz to suit your students' needs and abilities (multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions)*



# Suggested activity

## Research and presentation task

*Goal: To foster students' understanding of climate change, develop research and communication skills, promote knowledge sharing and awareness, and encourage critical thinking on climate issues*

*Assign research tasks focusing on climate change and its impact.*

*Encourage students to investigate various aspects of climate change, including its environmental and community effects.*

- *Students present their research in group presentations using a digital format using various creative expression forms (art, music, etc.)*



# Suggested activity

## Debates

*Goal: To enhance students' understanding of climate change by examining real-world issues/case studies, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and raising awareness of its environmental and societal impacts*

*Provide students with climate change case studies/topics that illustrate the impact on various elements (environmental and human)*

*Students analyse these case studies' causes, effects, and potential responses.*

*Lead students to consider the impact on careers and how that would look like and what is needed (ex., knowledge, skills)*

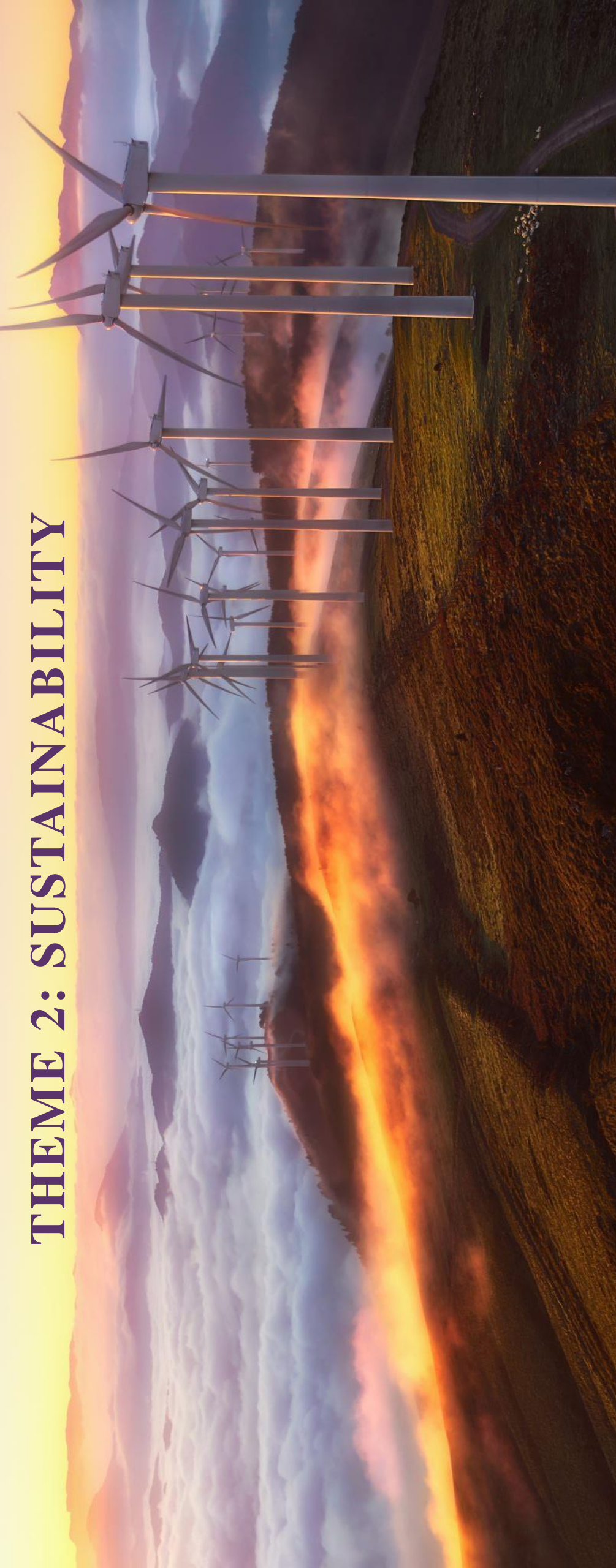


# Reflection for practitioners

Take a moment to reflect on this:

*“The question is not, is climate change happening? The question is, what do we do about it?” (Hooley, 2023).*

## THEME 2: SUSTAINABILITY



*“It shall be the duty of every person and entity, whether public or private, to protect the environment and to assist in the taking of preventive and remedial measures to protect the environment and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner”*  
(Environment Protection Act, 2019, p. 4).

# Sustainability

**Social**

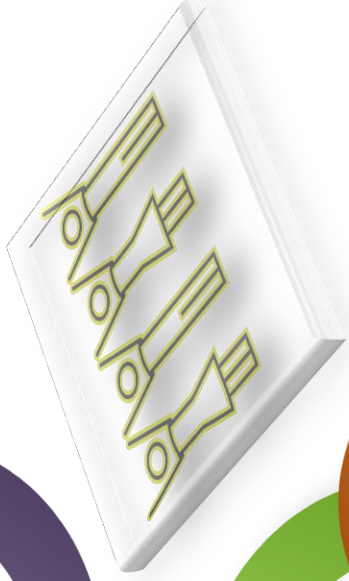
**Equity**

**Economic**

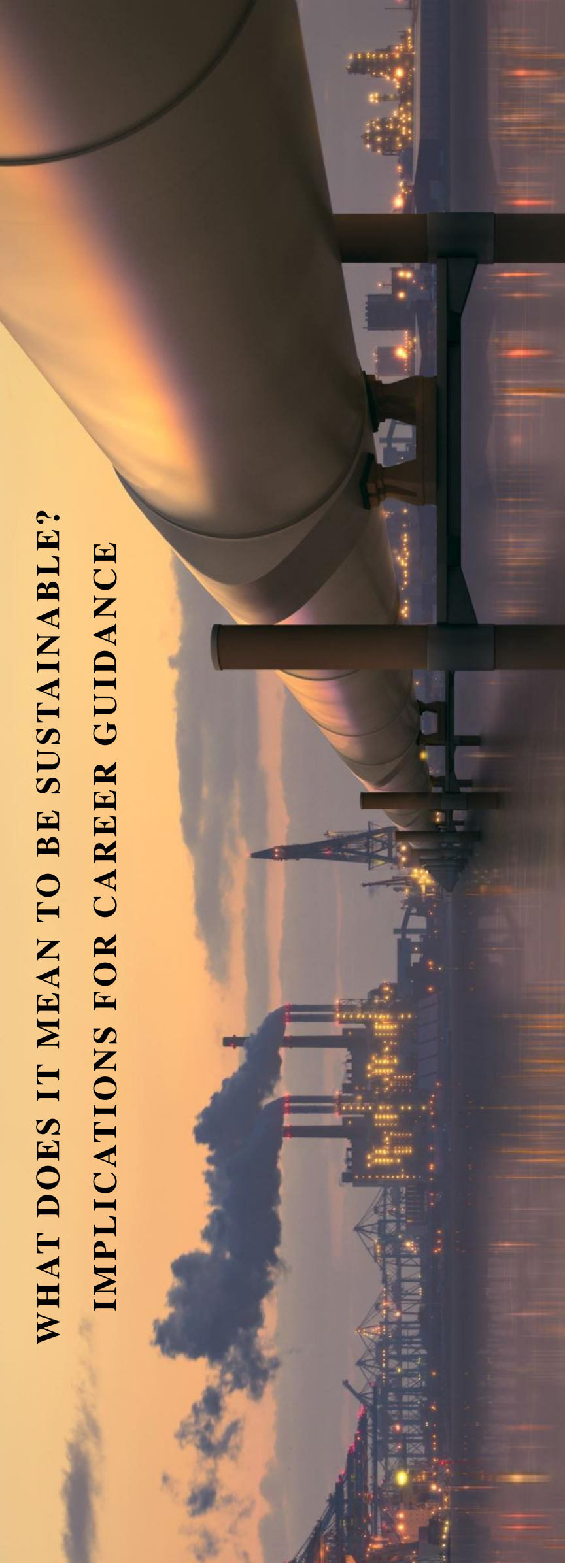
**Green business**

**Environmental**

**Conservation**




# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SUSTAINABLE? IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER GUIDANCE



Economic growth has a dual nature: while it has led to substantial improvements in living standards and poverty reduction, it has also put immense pressure on the planet's natural resources, resulting in biodiversity loss, water stress, and significant contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions (UNEP, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that this growth has come at a significant cost to the environment, underscoring the urgent need for a shift towards sustainable development.

“Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987, p. 15). Climate change and sustainability have gained prominence in recent years in public discourse and media (Hašková, 2020). Addressing climate change is closely linked to sustainability, both striving for a harmonious balance between human activities and the environment. Nations have heightened their awareness of these pressing issues, resulting in actions aimed at mitigating the climate crisis through eco-friendly systems. Education is one way to address the challenges posed by climate change. It is linked with sustainability at all levels, with competencies integrated into the curriculum and recognises the interrelated aspects encompassing environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions within various disciplines and subjects (Bianchi et al., 2022).



Additionally, sustainability is essential for social equity as it ensures fair access to resources and reduces inequalities, ultimately contributing to a more just and ethical society. In view of this, there is a growing need to increase awareness about the importance of establishing a universal right to “decent and humane work” (Pouyaud & Guichard, 2018, p. 41), which suggests transforming career guidance to inform young people about these principles and empower them to demand such rights for themselves. In this regard, education plays a vital role in shaping the mindset of future generations towards sustainability, which signifies a fundamental shift in perspective and goes beyond theoretical discussions; it represents a purposeful approach (McKeown, 2006). Empowering students to take action and promote sustainability is vital (Gibb, 2016).

Education *about* sustainable development and education *for* sustainable development are two essential components of addressing our time’s pressing environmental and societal challenges. The former involves raising awareness and engaging in theoretical discussions about sustainable development, while the latter regards education as a powerful tool to achieve sustainability goals actively. Education is a tool for making a positive difference in the world. It motivates people to use their education to promote sustainability, creating a tangible impact through their careers and daily lives (McKeown, 2006).



Career guidance within educational contexts is vital for inspiring students to think about environmental concerns (Hooley, 2022). To effectively support students in a rapidly changing job market, career guidance practitioners must remain well-informed about shifting job trends and adopt a culturally sensitive approach (ILO, 2022; Khalil, 2017). This reveals the pivotal role of career education in introducing students to a wide range of issues, including environmental elements (Irving, 2014).

# Keywords



*career guidance*



*education*



*empowerment*



*environment*



*sustainable development*



# DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING!



## Global Resources Outlook

*Natural resources underpin the lives we live. Use has more than tripled since 1970. The extraction and processing of resources for materials, fuels, and food accounts for about half of global greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90 per cent of biodiversity loss and water stress.*



## Sustainability: What does it have to do with career development?

*This webinar introduces the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the relationship between the SDGs and social justice in relation to career development practice.*



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Here are some strategies to actively engage students in addressing **sustainability** within the context of career guidance, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge for sustainable career choices.

**Targeted key competencies**

*Collaboration; communication skills; critical reflection; knowledge acquisition; leadership skills; problem-solving; research skills*

# Suggested activity

## **Environmental impact analysis**

*Goal: To educate students about the environmental impact of different industries and activities, fostering awareness of their roles in climate change, biodiversity loss, and water stress*

*Assign students research tasks related to the environmental impact of specific sectors, like agriculture, transportation, or energy production.*

*Students explore the ways these sectors cause or amend global environmental issues.*

*Students can present their learning points through various creative forms, such as presentations, reports, or multimedia.*

*Students' work can be shared on relevant social media and physically within the school/college.*



# Suggested activity

## SDGs and social justice discussion

- **Goal:** To educate students about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their connection to social justice
- Start the session with an introduction to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their significance as a global agenda to address critical challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.
- Link to career development by encouraging students to reflect on the link between social justice and career development and how individuals, regardless of their chosen profession, can contribute to achieving SDGs and promoting a more just and ethical society.
- Group Discussion: Divide the students into groups and assign one or more SDGs to discuss how careers can address them.
- Individual student reflection: Students choose one or more SDGs and share how they think they can make a difference in achieving this SDG through their future job or career choice.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



(United Nations, 2015a)

# Suggested activity

## Sustainability awareness presentation

- *Goal: To help students better understand sustainability and its key ideas and to show them why it is essential*
- *In small groups, students are given a sustainability concept to discuss, such as carbon footprint, fair trade, etc.*
- *Each group is asked to make a short presentation to explain their concept to the group and why it is essential for the environment and society as a whole.*
- *Students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss the presented concepts and their relevance in the modern world.*



# Suggested activity



## **Action planning**

**Goal:** *To foster sustainable school practices*

*Students brainstorm a list of aspects at their school that contribute to sustainability and unsustainability and in groups, they work on suggestions for potential realistic solutions for unsustainable ones.*

*Students devise a plan to tackle these proposed solutions, including individuals who can support them.*

# Reflection for practitioners

TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THIS:

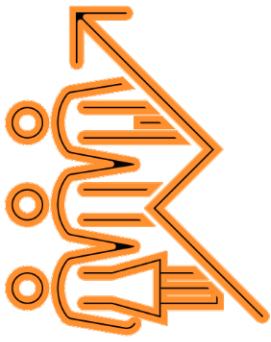
*“WE CAN PAY THE BILL NOW OR PAY DEARLY IN THE FUTURE” (UNITED NATIONS).*

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# Theme 3: Green economics

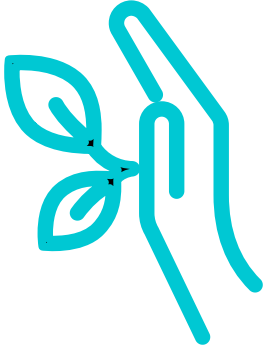


*“A green economy is one of the tools for achieving sustainable social, economic and environmental development” (GAIN, 2017, p. 5).*



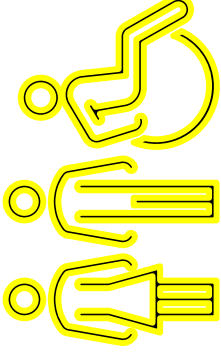
**SUSTAINABLE**

**GROWTH**



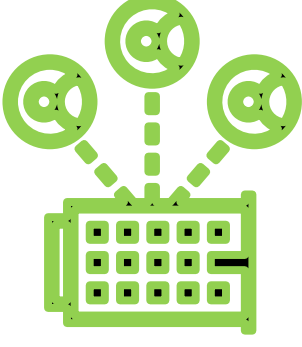
**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**PRESERVATION**



**HUMAN**

**WELFARE**



**GREEN**

**CAREERS**

# Green economics – Key concepts

# WHAT CONSTITUTES A GREEN ECONOMY?

A sustainable or green economy is a framework that elevates human welfare and societal fairness while significantly curbing environmental threats and ecological shortages. It thrives within a community aiming for “zero carbon emissions and a reduced ecological footprint” (UNEP, 2012, p. 2). The concept of a sustainable economy emphasises addressing the basic needs of people, especially those who are in poverty, while also recognising and respecting the limitations of the environment in meeting both current and future needs, addressing both the well-being of society and the planet (Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014). A green economy embraces fresh approaches to production and consumption, aiming to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Policymakers must develop strategies that encourage sustainable production and consumption.

In responding to environmental challenges and fostering sustainable practices, there is also a growing need to enhance one’s learning abilities. As individuals navigate their career and life paths, it is essential to consider how their choices interact with environmental changes (Plant, 2023, as cited in CICA, 2023b). This involves adapting learning approaches to address climate-related issues effectively. Concurrently, the workforce is evolving, requiring diverse competencies to support the journey towards achieving a carbon-neutral state. However, it is not simply a matter of training in new technologies; specific industries have unique demands. Proficiencies for a sustainable society encompass essential “life skills, problem-solving, critical thinking” (p. 2) and the ability to evaluate and nurture ideas that influence and transform behaviours (UNEP, 2012).




In a world where young people confront relentless messages promoting increased consumption amid an uncertain global economy and scarce job prospects, it is crucial to recognise that our current lifestyles strain the resources of 1.5 planets. If this trajectory persists, by the 2030s, humankind will require the resources of two Earths to sustain us. Therefore, a transition to a sustainable, socially equitable, and environmentally conscious green economy is central, one which calls for the collective efforts of governments, industries, communities, and youth, each playing a vital role in weaving this transformation into our daily lives, skills, and jobs (UNEP, 2012).



# SKILLS FOR A JUST TRANSITION

When addressing employability skills within the framework of a green transition, green employment should encompass not only environmental sustainability but also prioritise the assurance of high quality. This means that jobs should be both productive and provide sufficient income and social security whilst upholding workers' rights and involving them in decision-making processes that impact their livelihoods (GAIN, 2017). A green transition must also ensure fairness for the workforce and the creation of good jobs where “skills development is a cornerstone of that just transition” (ILO, 2019, p. 5).





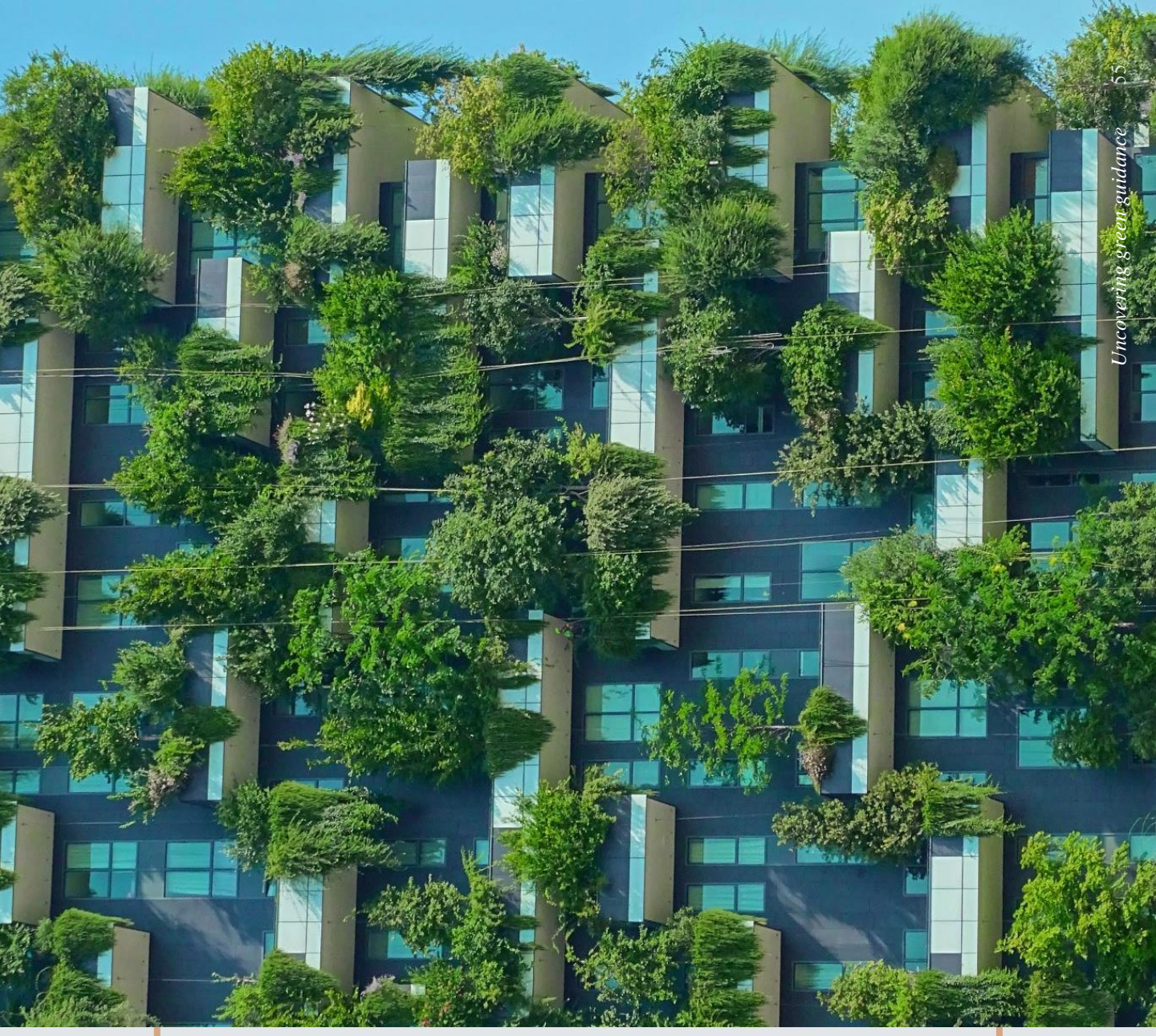
Today's largest-ever generation of young people is in a position to lead the transition to a green economy. Roughly half the world's population is under 25, and their successful integration into the workforce by 2050 is fundamental. Despite being the most educated generation, they encounter substantial unemployment issues, with around 75 million being jobless globally. To address this, providing them with adequate education and training is vital, enhancing their ability to contribute effectively to the labour market (UNEP, 2012). Thus, it is evident that supporting young people with the necessary skills and education to lead the transition to a green economy is vital, which is where the EU Skills Agenda represents one of the pivotal mechanisms for addressing this objective. This agenda is a five-year plan aimed at enhancing skills for individuals and businesses, focusing on sustainability, social fairness, and crisis resilience. It connects to various European strategies and initiatives, with 12 actions, including upskilling, lifelong learning, and investments in skills, aiming to achieve specific objectives by 2025 (European Commission, 2016).

Basic skills like environmental awareness, teamwork, and safety are needed across all skill levels, while higher-skilled workers may also require additional abilities such as analytical thinking, innovation, and strategic leadership (ILO, 2022). Given the urgency and magnitude of environmental transitions, there is a growing need for more transformative abilities which incorporate job-specific skills like business and technology proficiency and more general skills such as adaptability, creativity, and resilience, referred to as “green life skills” (Kwauk & Casey, 2021, as cited in ILO, 2022, p. 105).

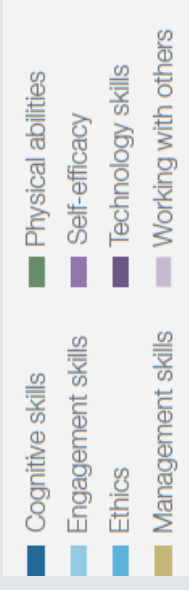
# SUSTAINABLE JOB TRENDS

The green economy's expansion can create good jobs for young people and support sustainable economic practices (ILO, 2022). However, they must receive proper guidance to access such employment prospects, highlighting the essential role of career guidance. The requirement for up-to-date labour market information that can be effectively communicated to young students is essential to achieving this objective.

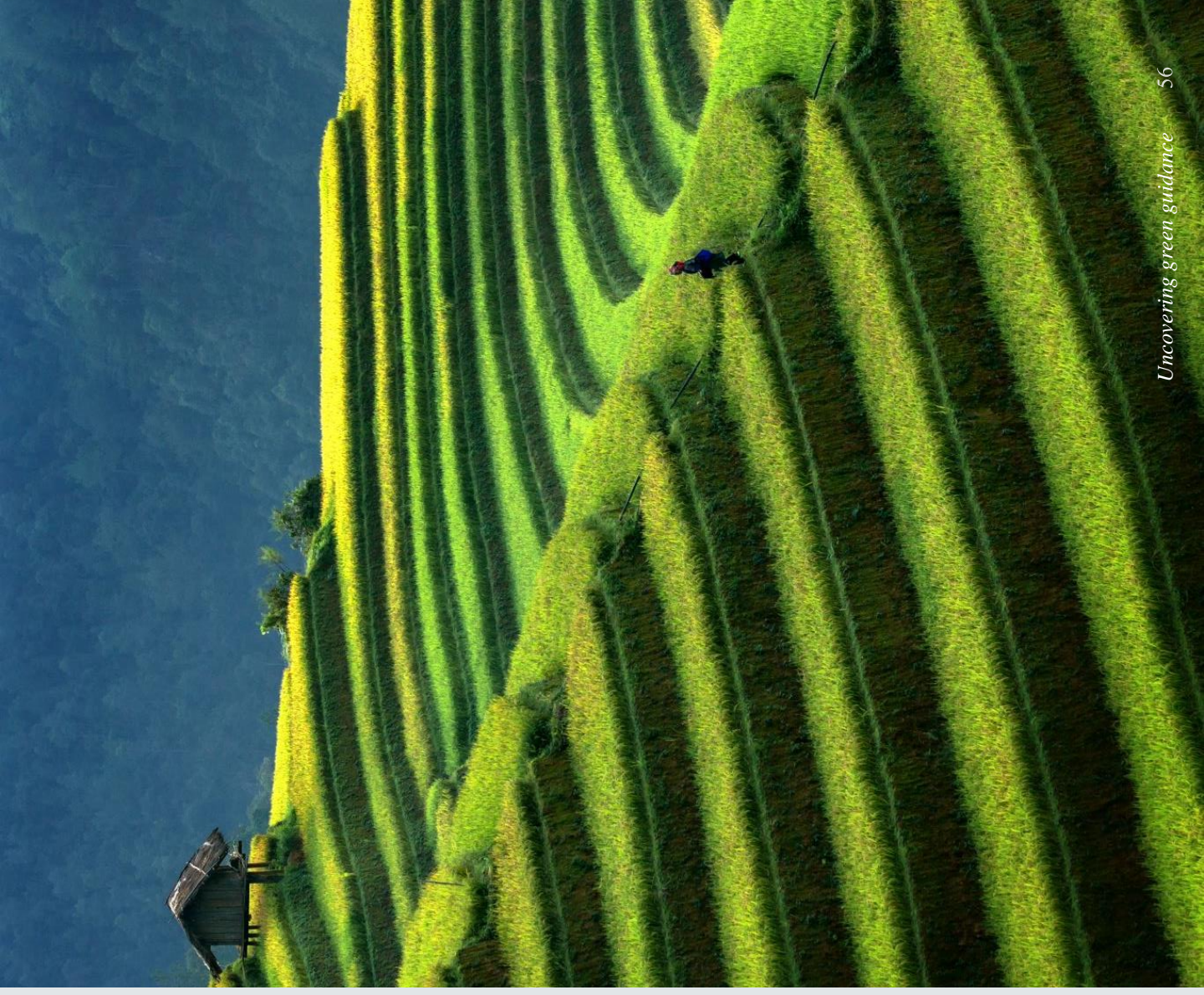
According to the World Economic Forum (2023), the most sought-after core skills comprise analytical thinking, creative thinking, and self-efficacy, including resilience, flexibility, motivation, self-awareness, and curiosity. The following figure indicates the current sought-after core skills presented by the World Economic Forum as at 2023. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that this information is subject to change, emphasising the need for regular updates.



1. Analytical thinking
2. Creative thinking
3. Resilience, flexibility and agility
4. Motivation and self-awareness
5. Curiosity and lifelong learning
6. Technological literacy
7. Dependability and attention to detail
8. Empathy and active listening
9. Leadership and social influence
10. Quality control
11. Systems thinking
12. Talent management
13. Service orientation and customer service
14. Resource management and operations
15. AI and big data
16. Reading, writing and mathematics
17. Design and user experience
18. Multi-lingualism
19. Teaching and mentoring
20. Programming
21. Marketing and media
22. Networks and cybersecurity
23. Environmental stewardship
24. Manual dexterity, endurance and precision
25. Global citizenship
26. Sensory-processing abilities



**Core skills in 2023** From: “Future of Jobs Report 2023,” by World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Survey 2023 in World Economic Forum, 2023, p. 38 ([https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Future\\_of\\_Jobs\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2023.pdf)). Copyright 2023 by World Economic Forum.



## KEY WORDS



core skills



green economy



just transition



labour market trends



sustainable production



## Assessing and anticipating skills for the green transition

*This webinar provides an opportunity to learn from approaches that are being undertaken internationally.*



## Decent work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

*This document explores the connection between the workforce and sustainability, identifying global trends.*



## Ecojustice, equity and ethics: Challenges for educational and career guidance

*A paper on the dominant global policy discourse, mainly influenced by neoliberal political frameworks, often overlooks the critical examination of how capitalist economics affect human and environmental well-being, and it calls for a shift towards an eco-justice perspective in education and career guidance to rectify this imbalance.*



## Future of Jobs Report 2023

*The 2023 Future of Jobs Report by the World Economic Forum focuses on the Fourth Industrial Revolution's impact on the labour market, assessing potential disruptions and strategies for job transitions from declining to emerging roles. It is built on a survey of major global employers' expectations for job trends from 2023 to 2027.*



## Global employment trends for youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people

*This report provides an update on key youth labour market indicators and trends, focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and on how targeted and sustained investments in the green, blue, digital, creative and care economies can support a human-centred recovery and help to improve the labour market for young people.*



## Global Green Skills Report 2023

*This report identifies global trends at the intersection of the workforce and sustainability.*



## New Skills Agenda for Europe

*By 2025, almost half of all jobs in Europe will need highly skilled workers. The New Skills Agenda for Europe will help equip Europeans with more and better skills by investing in people's basic and higher skills, connecting the world of business and education, and recognising skills learned outside school.*



## Report of the World Commission on environment and development: Our common future

*This report introduced the idea of sustainable development and offers a thorough insight into the subject.*



## YouthXchange: Green skills and lifestyles guidebook

*The YouthXchange Green Skills and Lifestyles guidebook facilitates the connection between the green economy, societies, and jobs with young people's lifestyles. It emphasises the skills needed for these transitions, featuring case studies, insights on green jobs, social innovation, entrepreneurship, and life skills.*

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Here are some strategies to actively engage students in addressing **green economics** within the context of career guidance, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge for sustainable career choices.

## Targeted key competencies

Career exploration; communication and networking; critical thinking and analysis; creativity and innovation; environmental awareness; decision-making and action planning; information evaluation



# Suggested activity

## Spotlight on Lindsay Azzopardi: a 3D Sustainable Fashion Designer

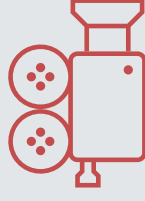
### A case study

**Goal:** *To engage students in the world of sustainable fashion design, foster an understanding of the fashion industry's environmental and ethical considerations, and inspire them to explore innovative and sustainable practices in their future careers.*

*Begin the session by introducing the importance of sustainability, environmental conservation, and the green economy.*

*Present the case study using the provided videos link below according to the students' needs. Alternatively, the provided article can be used.*

*Break students into small groups to discuss different aspects of the case study.*



[videos link](#)

# STUDENTS' DISCUSSION

- Suggested questions:
- *What was most interesting or surprising about the 3D Sustainable Fashion Designer case study?*
- *What does sustainability mean in fashion, according to this case?*
- *Can you think of ways to include sustainable practices in your fashion choices?*
- *Did the case study change your perception of what a career in fashion design could be like?*
- *How might sustainable fashion choices in one part of the world impact people in another?*
- *What small actions could you take to contribute to more sustainable fashion practices in your own life?*



# CASE STUDY - ARTICLE



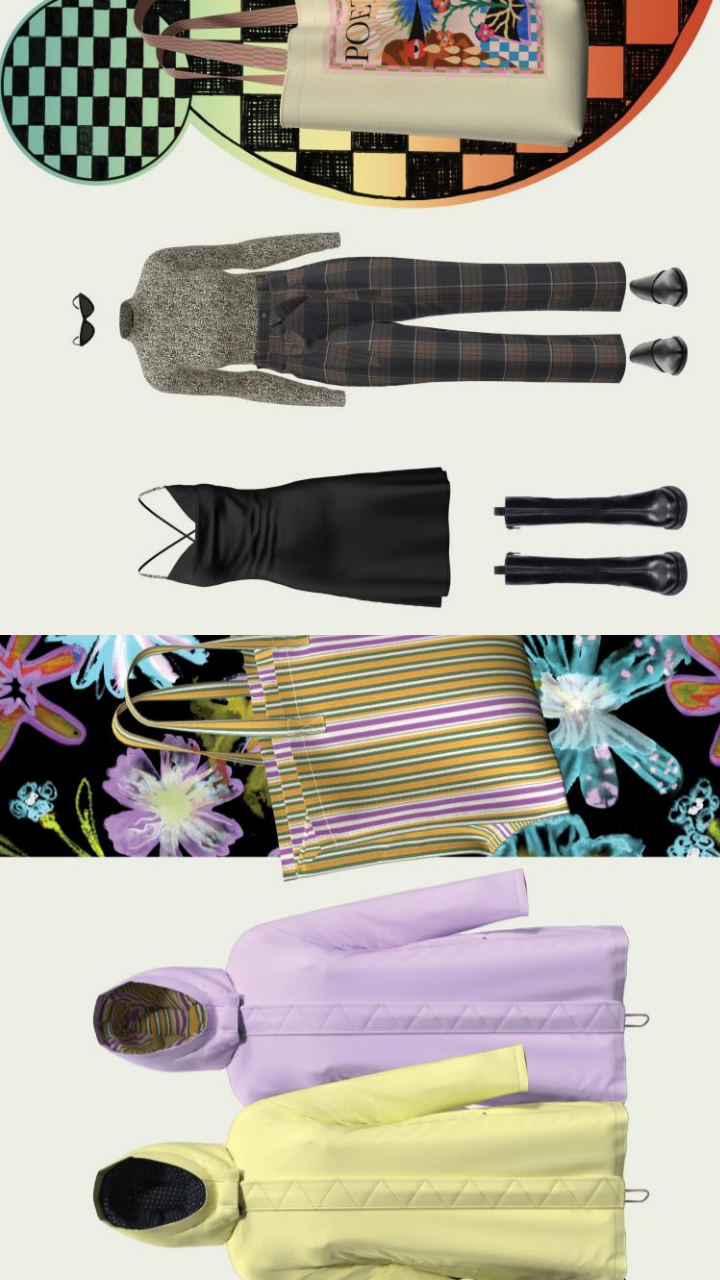
Lindsay Azzopardi, a 28-year-old Maltese residing in Amsterdam, holds a bachelor's degree in Fashion, Textiles, and Technology studies, specialising in Fashion Design from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Currently, Lindsay is employed as a 3D Fashion Designer.

## **Career Journey**

Lindsay's educational path spans diverse fields, a Bachelor's in Psychology (Hons) and a Diploma in Design Foundation Studies. Her career route includes roles as a graphic design student before specialising in fashion at AUAS.

## **Inspiration for Sustainability**

Lindsay's passion for sustainability arose during her fashion studies, where she learned about the fashion industry's environmental impact. Her commitment to challenging traditional practices and finding sustainable alternatives led her to explore natural dyeing methods, particularly using bacteria.



# SAMPLE WORK BY LINDSAY





# SUSTAINABLE FASHION DESIGN CAREER

## **Required Qualifications and Skills**

To thrive in sustainable fashion design, Lindsay recommends pursuing studies in Fashion Design at institutions emphasising sustainability. Essential skills include technical abilities like researching and presenting data, coupled with soft skills, such as being action-oriented and dedicated.

## **Typical Workday**

As a 3D Fashion Designer, Lindsay's workday involves tasks like email correspondence, team meetings, assignments, problem-solving, creating mock-ups, and validating ideas through feedback.

## **Career Progression Opportunities**

Career development opportunities include attending international conferences, software training, learning from guest speakers, and participating in online forums.



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN SUSTAINABILITY

**Technical skills** include researching and presenting information, while **soft skills** involve being committed, dedicated, and skilled at problem-solving and influencing others.

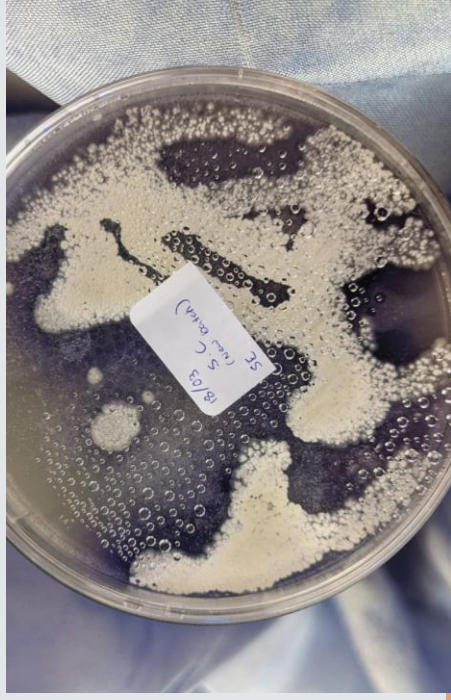
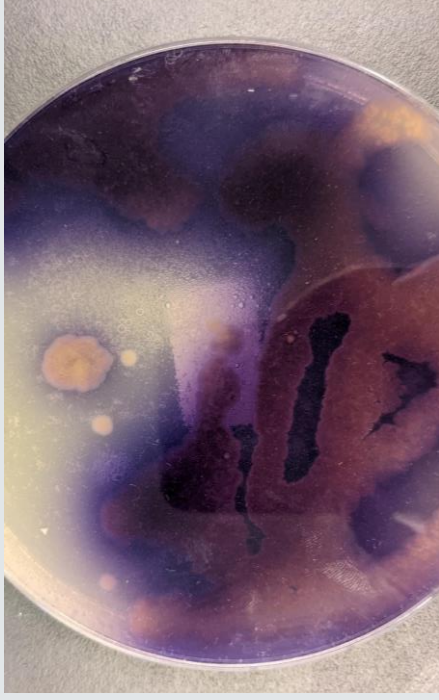
Lindsay encourages making sustainability a personal value, fostering a deep understanding and commitment to living and promoting it. She also suggests staying current in sustainability through self-initiative, employer-provided training, and social media engagement, highlighting the importance of reading articles and following relevant profiles of individuals who are for sustainability.

# PROTOTYPING IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Lindsay works on 3D clothing prototyping to minimise sample waste, emphasising its positive environmental impact compared to traditional garment development processes.

## **Benefits of Sustainable Fashion Design**

Lindsay highlights the reduction of shipping samples and the potential for zero-waste material sourcing as significant benefits in her current role.





# LINDSAY'S APPLICATION OF SUSTAINABLE DYEING TO GARMENTS



# Reflection for practitioners

Take a moment to reflect on your results following this online quiz:

[Ecological Footprint Calculator](#)

*What is your ecological footprint? How many planets does it take to support your lifestyle? Take this free quiz to find out!*

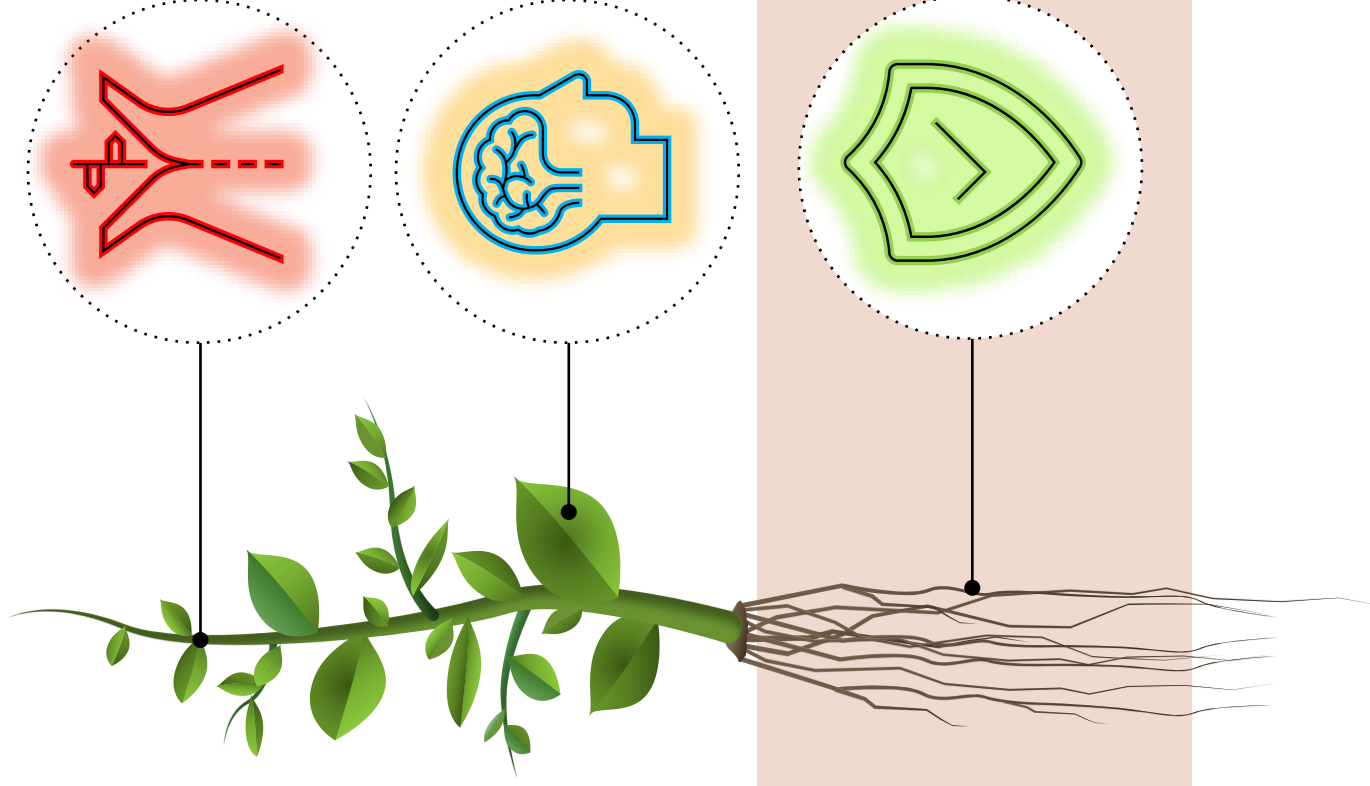




# Theme 4: Green guidance

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*“In order to engage with 21st-century problems and find solutions to tackle them locally and globally, learners need to be equipped with the relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. It is critical for them to understand themselves and their connections with others, as well as realize their individual and collective impacts on the world around them” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 5).*



Decisions

Knowledge

Values

# Green Career Guidance

# The practical value of green guidance in career development

Green guidance redefines career paths by prioritising ecological considerations over purely economic factors (Plant, 2020). This approach integrates sustainable development, emphasising social justice in the context of decent work while urging individuals to consider the environmental impact of their chosen career paths. Such a green outlook benefits clients, workplaces, communities, and society overall (John O’Donohoe in NCGE, 2022b). Adopting a “green glasses” perspective (Hooley, 2023, as cited in Fondacija Tempus, 2023) allows practitioners to envision an enhanced society rooted in social justice and value the natural environment while acknowledging economic considerations (Plant, 2021). Such an approach prioritises sustainability in career choices, calling for professionals to integrate sustainability into their practice (Plant, 2015). Nevertheless, it is crucial to appreciate that embracing a new approach takes time and does not happen overnight; however, it can commence with reflection. The pervasive impact of climate change necessitates individual introspection to contemplate one’s role in addressing the challenges posed by climate change (Purchase, 2019).

Thus, integrating Plant’s (2014) perspective, green guidance takes on a proactive role by challenging conventional economic growth agendas and endorsing more environmentally conscious approaches to growth. Within the backdrop of the green transition, a continuous shift towards environmental sustainability is evident, and its implications on current occupations underline the need for reskilling and/or upskilling. Consequently, new green occupations emerge (ILO, 2019), requiring career guidance to address the demands for skills and competencies in this evolving landscape. Career guidance practitioners require the right skills to guide students and clients towards choices that match sustainability principles (ETF, 2020). Therefore, practitioners must bring sustainability into education at all levels, necessitating the proper support to help them do their work more effectively. Of course, this does not come without its challenges, as “when we talk about green guidance and sustainability, it’s not a clearcut path” (Plant, 2022, as cited in NCGE, 2022a).



# Addressing challenges in green career guidance

“Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it” (Ban Ki-Moon, 2016, as cited in UNESCO, 2016, p. 2). As we span the world of green guidance, practitioners and students encounter challenges that call for practical solutions to promote a more sustainable approach to career planning. A significant obstacle is the lack of awareness among students and practitioners about the crucial role of sustainability in shaping career paths. To address this, proactive steps can be taken, including workshops, seminars, and online courses to raise awareness and highlight the importance of sustainability in career decisions. Indeed, this manual itself commences the process of addressing such challenges.

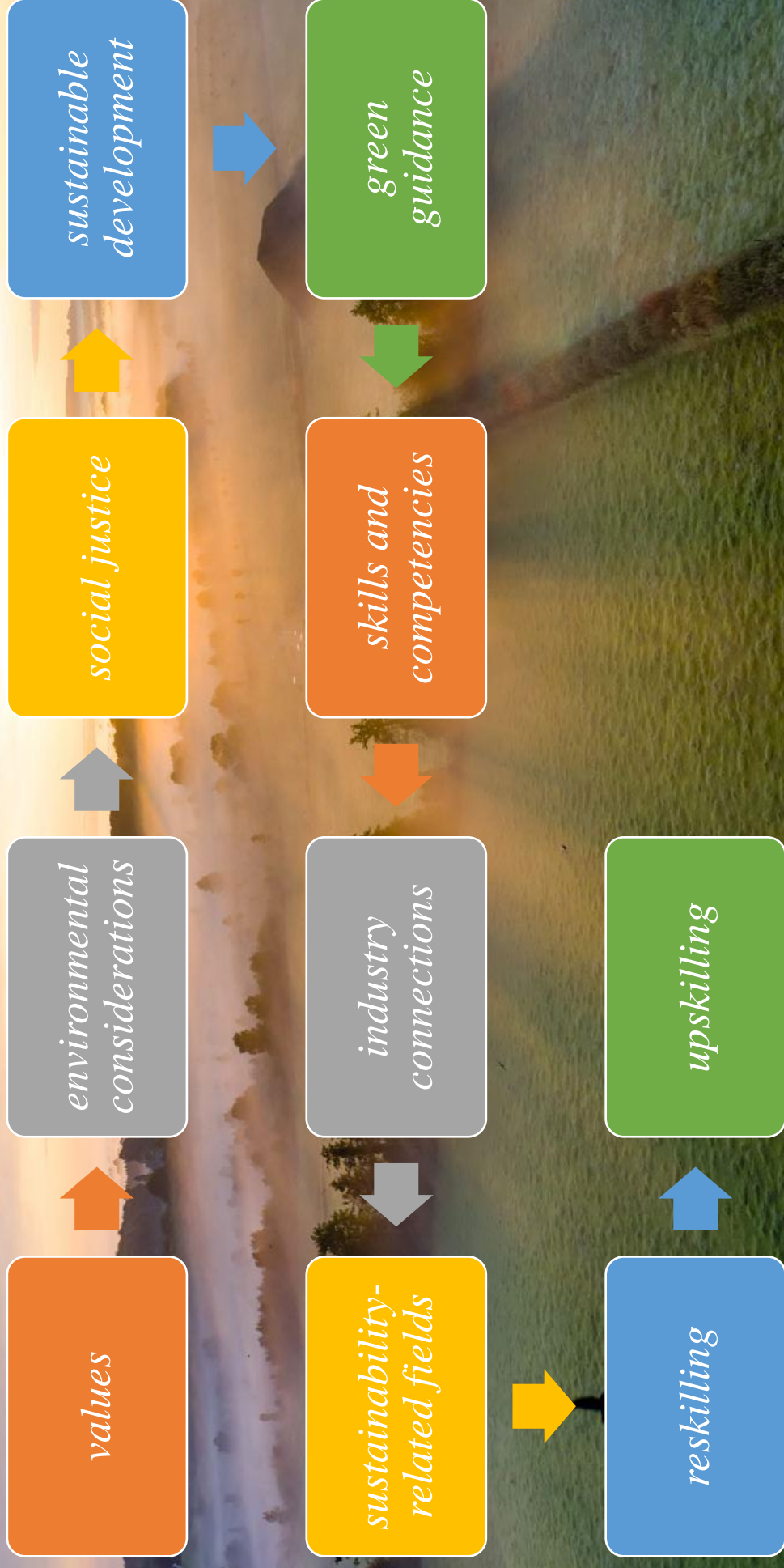
Resistance to change is a common hurdle, especially when embracing unconventional, sustainable career paths. To overcome this, sharing success stories and case studies of individuals who have found fulfilment in sustainability-related fields can help ease apprehensions. The constantly changing landscape of sustainability presents another challenge, requiring ongoing adaptation to stay informed about the latest trends. Solutions include establishing partnerships with industry associations, attending sustainability conferences, and engaging with experts to keep well-informed and able to share relevant information with students.

Furthermore, students may struggle to balance their career aspirations with personal values related to sustainability. Offering guidance that encourages exploration of careers supported by their values and providing strategies for positively impacting different industries can help students gain awareness of such opportunities.

By actively addressing these challenges and embracing the evolving trends in sustainability, practitioners can provide more comprehensive and forward-thinking support to students. This can help students plan for careers that not only fulfil personal goals but also contribute to a more sustainable and ethical future.



# Keywords



# Deepen your understanding!



[A discussion on Green Guidance' with Dr Peter Plant](#)



[Career Guidance and Social Justice](#)

- *One can subscribe to receive regular articles uploaded to this website. The following are selected readings related to green guidance:*
- ['Green' Guidance](#)
- [Green guidance: Why career development needs to pay attention to environmental change](#)



[Career readiness and “green” career choices](#)

- *Teenage attitudes towards climate change were explored to enhance the understanding of their approaches to career guidance and sustainable employment.*



[Challenging career myths amid the climate crisis](#)

- *Career development professionals are essential in guiding individuals to meaningfully address the climate crisis by dispelling misconceptions, emphasising skills over specific roles, and encouraging a flexible “what to do next” mindset.*



[Euroguidance 2021: Peter Plant](#)

- *“Career Guidance is asking the simple question: What is the impact of your career choice in terms of sustainability?”*



## Euroguidance Webinar - Green Guidance

- *This webinar delves into how lifelong guidance supports a sustainable future, covering green guidance's relevance and practical examples.*



## Green Guidance: Sustainability moves from the periphery to centre

- *In this webinar, Professor Peter Plant of Denmark describes and outlines the vital importance of Green Guidance in developing sustainable practices and supporting access to “green” careers.*



## The five signposts to socially just career guidance

- *Five signposts to lead towards emancipatory career guidance and set out a practical way to turn some of the ideas of social justice into career guidance activities and approaches*



## Working as a guidance counsellor in a changing world – (do) we have what it takes? Compendium | Cross Border Seminar Dresden 2023

- *The annual Cross Border Seminar in Dresden, organised by the National Euroguidance Centre in Germany and its European counterparts, gathered over 80 career counsellors from 13 countries to explore the evolving role of guidance practitioners in addressing global challenges, with the compiled compendium offering valuable insights and strategies shared during the event.*



## Working as a guidance counsellor in a changing world – (do) we have what it takes? National Surveys | Cross Border Seminar Dresden 2023

- *The Euroguidance Cross Border Seminars bring together guidance professionals and policymakers from various European countries to discuss and share innovative guidance practices, focusing on the evolving role of counsellors in addressing global challenges such as demographic changes, digital transformation, and ecological issues in the context of career guidance.*

# Student engagement



Here are some strategies to actively engage students in addressing **sustainable careers** within the context of career guidance, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge for sustainable career choices.



**Targeted key competencies**

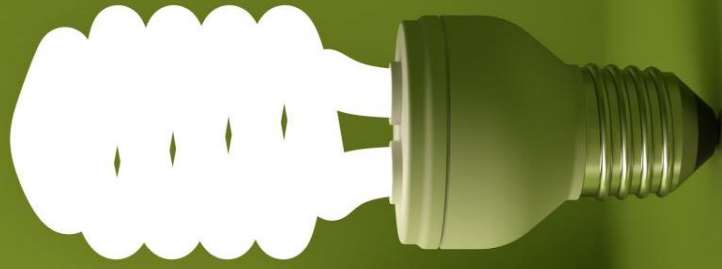


*Career exploration and goal setting; communication and discussion; critical thinking and reflection; networking*

# Suggested activity

## Sustainable career exploration

- *Goal: To help students explore careers that embrace sustainability and environmental protection and to foster their understanding of the importance of sustainable job choices*
- *Provide resources and information about current job trends related to sustainability and environmental protection.*
- *Encourage students to discuss and reflect on careers that contribute to a healthier and more environmentally sustainable society.*
- *Alternatively, students can identify a career path that interests them and reflect on how this career is sustainable in its processes and what more could be done to make it more sustainable.*



# Suggested activity

## Green career fair/seminar integrating eco-focused guest speakers

- *Goal: To expose students to a wide range of career opportunities in the green industry and connect them with real-world examples*
- *Invite professionals from various green industries to participate as speakers, give presentations, conduct workshops, and/or engage in interactive sessions.*
- *Professionals can share their career journeys, experiences, and the impact of their work on sustainability.*
- *Professionals should represent fields related to sustainability, environmental conservation, and green economy sectors.*
- *As a follow-up, engage the students in discussions to encourage them to ask questions and share their thoughts on the experience.*

# Suggested activity



## Green site visits and field trips

**Goal:** *To foster a connection between theory and real-world application, inspiring students to consider environmentally conscious career paths*

*As an extracurricular activity, students visit companies who are embracing sustainable practices in their operations and in this way, they are exposed to sustainable workplaces and initiatives in their community.*

*As a follow-up, engage the students in discussions to encourage them to ask questions and share their thoughts on the experience.*

# Reflection for practitioners

**Take a moment to reflect on this:**

*“Who you talk to, what you watch, what you do with your time: all of these sources push values and beliefs. If you’re going from one day to the next without questioning your values, you’ll be swayed by what everyone else – from your family to hordes of marketing professionals – wants you to think” (Shetty, 2020, p. 19).*





## **Green guidance: Beyond the individual in careers**

*“Green Guidance could be an essential component in developing the concept of future careers and a link to social justice and sustainability because career choices, however individual, have implications far beyond the individual” (Plant, 2021, as cited in OeAD, 2021).*

# Ikigai (生き甲斐) – A moment to reflect

Career choices extend beyond the individual and have broader implications, especially in terms of social justice and sustainability. *Ikigai* represents the intersection of four elements in life:

1. *What you love (your passion)*
2. *What you are good at (your vocation)*
3. *What the world needs (your mission)*
4. *What you can be paid for (your profession)*

In the context of career guidance practices, the link to this concept lies in considering not only personal fulfilment but also the impact of career choices on a larger scale. In this context, green guidance broadens career guidance by urging consideration of ecological and societal impacts, extending beyond personal fulfilment.

**Take a moment to reflect on your career guidance practices in relation to the concept of *Ikigai*.**



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## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1 – Authorisation letters



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19<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance EDUC-2022-00567 Christabel Saliba**

Dear Christabel Saliba,

With reference to your application EDUC-2022-00567 Christabel Saliba for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that **FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure.**

**You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.**

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Gravina', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Joseph Gravina  
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education



Tel: 25982743

researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Ref: R11-2022 1368

To: Education Officer – PSCD  
From: Senior Manager – Research Unit

Title of Research Study: *Green guidance: The role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools.*

---

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to Christabel Saliba to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit [www.research.gov.mt](http://www.research.gov.mt).

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo  
MA Ed (Open)  
Research Support Teacher  
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

f/Jeannine Vassallo she/her  
Senior Manager  
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YOUTH, RESEARCH & INNOVATION  
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### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Ref: R11-2022 1368

To: St Ignatius College – Career Advisor  
From: Senior Manager – Research Unit

Title of Research Study: *Green guidance: The role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools.*

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to Christabel Saliba to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit [www.research.gov.mt](http://www.research.gov.mt).

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo  
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## 7.2 Appendix 2 – Participant information letter

### Participant Information Letter

[Date]

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Christabel Saliba, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development. I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled *Green guidance: The role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools*; this is being supervised by Professor Ronald Sultana. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and what your involvement would entail should you decide to participate.

My study aims to explore how various career guidance practitioners address green career guidance in Maltese government secondary schools. It will analyse the practices and outcomes of career guidance in preparing secondary school students for their careers. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of the benefits and challenges of green career guidance within the educational sector. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for the purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss your perspectives and practices regarding green career guidance. Data collected through these interviews and any recordings and transcripts used for this dissertation will be saved in a password-protected folder on my personal computer and deleted following the completion of this study. Anonymity and confidentiality will always be maintained to safeguard your identity, and no reference to your name or other identifiable information will be made in my writing. Please also note that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and, where applicable, ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference. Should you decide to participate in this study, kindly fill in the attached consent form and forward it to the undersigned at [christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt](mailto:christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt)

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail at [christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt](mailto:christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt); you can also contact my supervisor via e-mail: [ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt](mailto:ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt)

Sincerely,

Christabel Saliba  
[christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt](mailto:christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt)

Professor Ronald Sultana  
[ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt](mailto:ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt)

## 7.3 Appendix 3 – Participant consent form

### Participant's Consent Form

#### Green guidance: The role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools

I, the undersigned, give my consent to participate in the study conducted by Christabel Saliba. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and any questions I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason or penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. If I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published) unless the erasure of data would render it impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in an interview in which the researcher will ask questions in relation to career guidance practices to explore how various career guidance practitioners address green career guidance in Maltese government secondary schools. I am aware that the interview will take approximately an hour and a half. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. Audio recording:
  - a. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving my consent for this interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).
  - b. MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE
    - I agree to this [method of data collection] being [audio recorded].
    - I do not agree to this [method of data collection] being [audio recorded].
5. I am aware that the interview may be held online; the researcher will use Zoom and will activate the Require Encryption for 3<sup>rd</sup> party endpoints SIP/H-323 function. The researcher will audio record the session.

5. I am aware that the interview may be held online; the researcher will use Zoom and will activate the Require Encryption for 3<sup>rd</sup> party endpoints SIP/H-323 function. The researcher will video record/only audio record [select appropriate option] the session.
6. I am aware that extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in an anonymous form or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g. respondent A].
7. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
8. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study. I also understand that this research may benefit others by generating awareness of the role of green career guidance.
9. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and, where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
10. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form and erased on completion of the study and following the publication of results.
11. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Christabel Saliba  
[christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt](mailto:christabel.saliba.02@um.edu.mt)

\_\_\_\_\_

Professor Ronald Sultana  
[ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt](mailto:ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt)

## 7.4 Appendix 4 – Participant interview guide

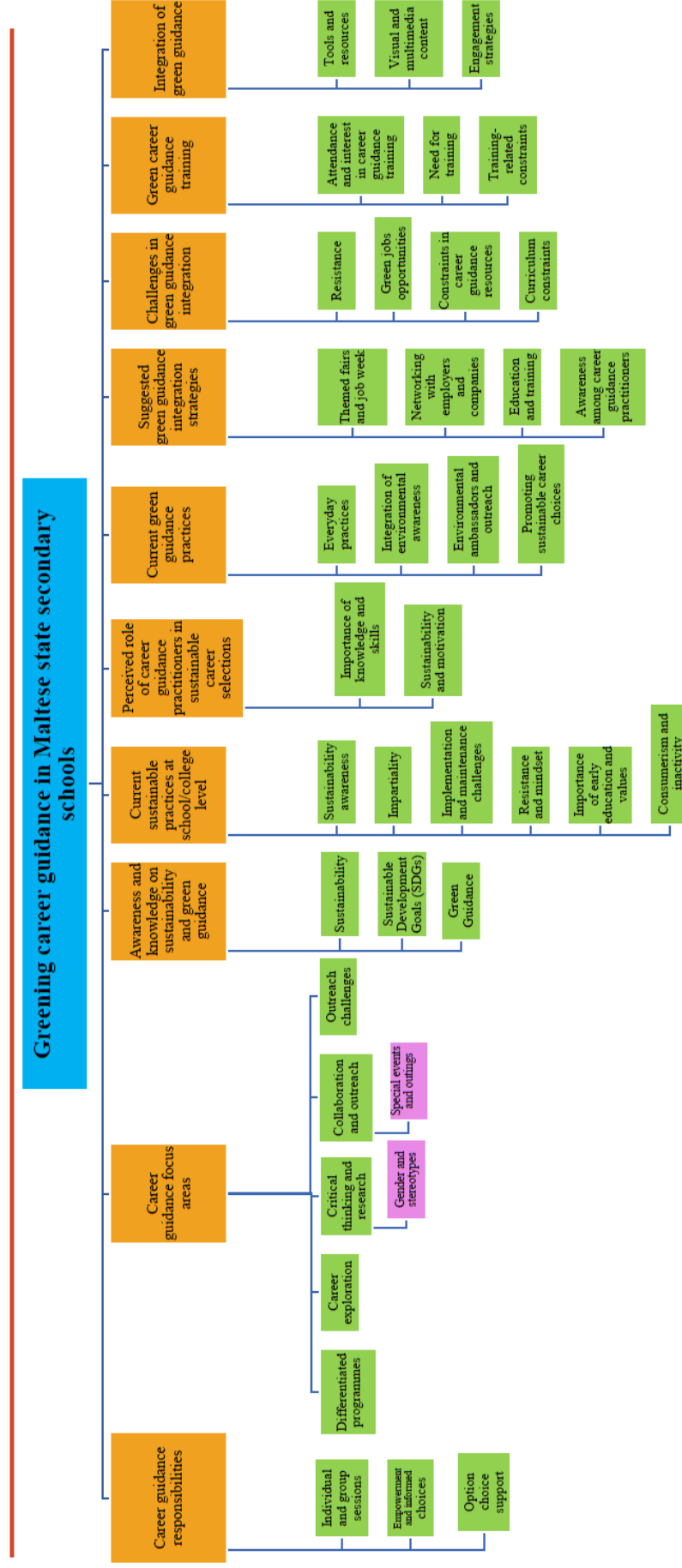
1. Can you tell me about your background and experience in your current role?
2. What are the responsibilities assigned to your role?
3. I am going to mention some words and phrases and would like you to tell me what comes to mind when you hear the following:
  - a. Sustainability
  - b. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - c. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
  - d. Green Guidance
4. What role do you see career guidance practitioners playing in promoting sustainability practices in career selections?
5. When it comes to climate action or sustainable practices, what is the current situation within the college/school that you work at?
6. Do you address sustainability in your practice?
  - a. If yes, can you tell me more about it?
  - b. If sustainability is not being addressed, can you explain the reasons for this?
7. Have you had training in relation to green jobs and their required skills and expertise?
  - a. If yes, how has it impacted your practice?
  - b. If not, would you be willing to attend training in relation to career guidance for sustainability? Explain your reasons.
8. Can you share any suggestions on how green guidance can be integrated into the practice of career guidance and education?

## 7.5 Appendix 5 - Case study interview guide

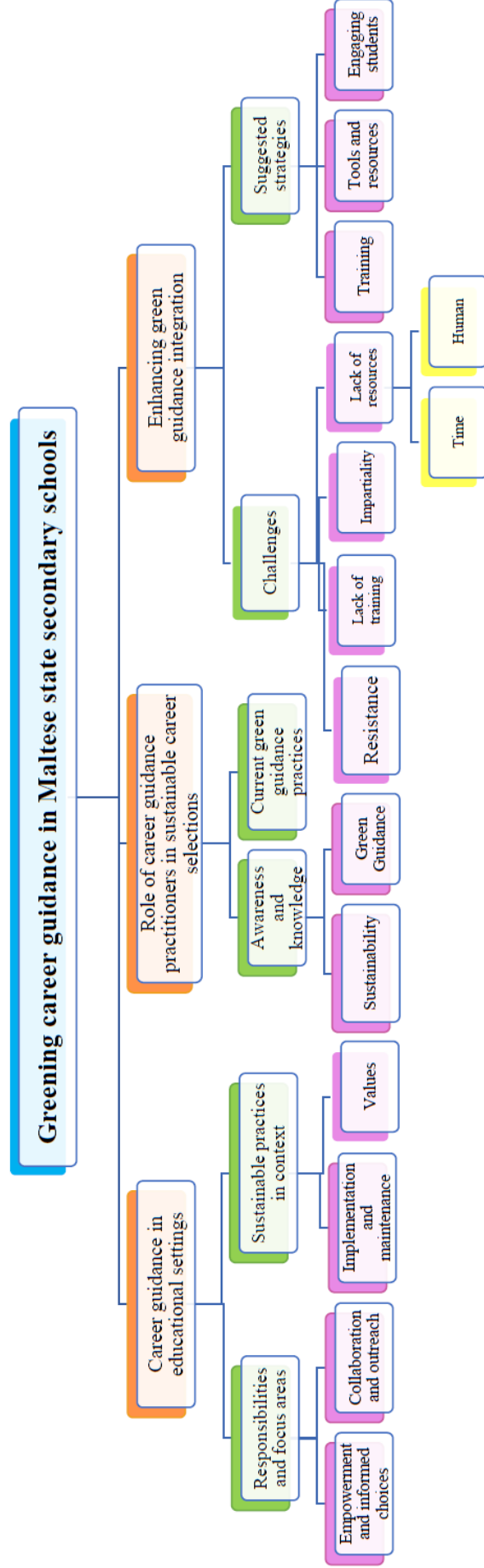
1. Could you **introduce** yourself and tell me about what you do?
  - a. Can you **describe** your career journey to where you are today?
  - b. What **inspired** you to pursue a career in sustainability? (Values, attitude)
  - c. What was the **impact of your education** formation towards this choice of career? (Particularly in **secondary** school)
2. What are the essential **qualifications** needed in the sustainability field?
3. What are the essential **skills** needed in the sustainability field? (*Technical and core – soft skills*) (*transversal*)
  - a. How have you been able to apply your sustainability skills in **different roles**?
4. Could you describe a typical workday? (*ex. How you start your day, any routine involved, such as checking emails, tasks to do, prioritising, etc.*)
5. What career development opportunities are available in this line of work? (*training can be mentioned as well*)
6. What have you **learned** from your experience in the sustainability field that you would like to share with others?
7. What have been some of the most **rewarding moments/projects/initiatives** in your sustainability career?
8. What **challenges** did you face when **starting out**? How did you overcome them?
  - a. What are the biggest **challenges** you face in your sustainability journey?
9. How do you stay current with the latest developments in the sustainability field? (*Knowledge – self-initiative / training by your employer – social media*)
10. What do you think needs to **happen** in order to make the sustainability field more **accessible** to people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives?
11. What **advice** would you give someone starting in the sustainability sector?

## 7.6 Appendix 6 – Preliminary Thematic Maps

# Thematic Map – 1



# Thematic Map – 2



## 7.7 Appendix 7 – Final Thematic Map

### Thematic Map – 3

