

Many Shades of Green – Guidance Counselor Students’ Perceptions of Green Guidance

Vesa Parkkonen
Päivi Pukkila
Keijo Hakala
School of Professional Teacher Education

Introduction

- Sustainable development and green guidance have recently become cross-cutting aspects of guidance and career counseling.
- The principles of sustainable development must also be visible in guidance and career counselors' practices.
- Despite its growing importance, green guidance has not been extensively studied, and more research is needed to understand the phenomenon.
- Future career and guidance counselors are in key position in creating change in thinking and establishing new applications in greener future.



Objectives

- The objective of this study focuses on sustainable development and green guidance from the perspective of guidance counsellor students.
 - The main aim is to understand guidance counselor students' perceptions of sustainable development and green guidance in guidance and career counseling.
 - Furthermore, the objective is to deepen the understanding of the role and significance of green guidance in counseling practices.



Research questions

1. How do the guidance counselor students **define sustainable development and green guidance** in guidance and career counseling?
2. What **meanings** do the guidance counselor students give to sustainable development and green guidance in their **practical work** with students and clients?
3. How can the perceptions and meanings of sustainable development and green guidance be **reflected** in guidance counsellor students' **practical work**?



Theoretical basis

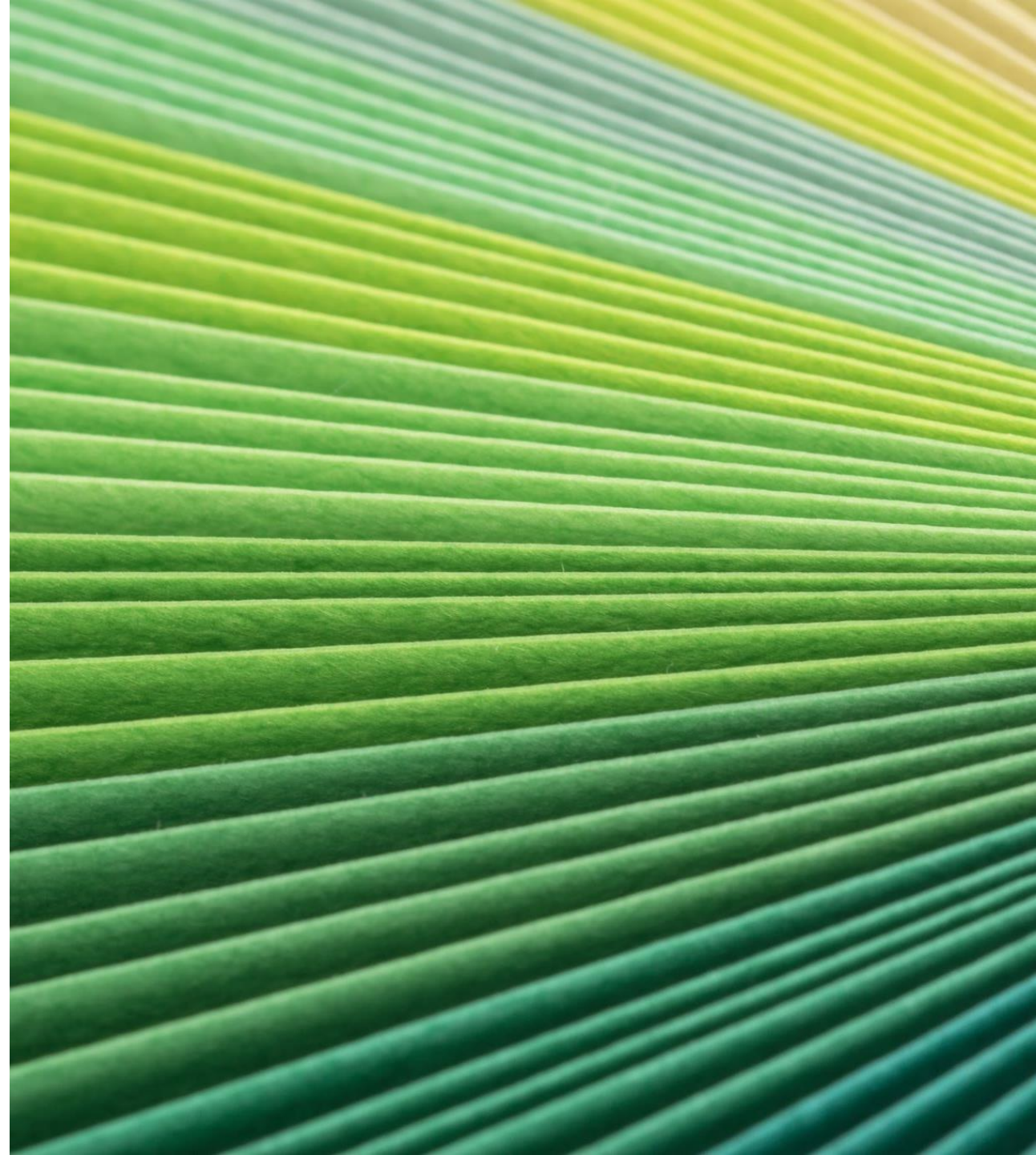
The theoretical background explaining green guidance in this study is based on Plant's (2015, 2020) principles of green guidance and Packer's (2019) light green and dark green approaches.

	Focus on society	Focus on individual
Focus on change DARK GREEN (Ecologism)	RADICAL (social change) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals to see social and environmental challenges as group – rather than just individual – challenges, e.g. through green critical pedagogy.	PROGRESSIVE (individual change) In careers practice this might look like: encouraging and empowering individuals to make individual career choices that take ecological wellbeing into account.
Focus on status quo LIGHT GREEN (Environmentalism)	CONSERVATIVE (social control) In careers practice this might look like: acting as a 'gatekeeper', assisting individuals to develop their skillset/attributes for a greener economy.	LIBERAL (non-directive) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals who are environmentally-minded to make career choices in line with their personal values and skillset.

Figure 1. 'Light green' versus 'darker green' approaches to environmental sustainability guardant of sociopolitical ideologies, adopted from Packer (2019)

Data

- Data was collected from 13 guidance counselor students as part of a Guidance Counselor Education Programme at HAMK University of Applied Sciences
- Data is based on assignment related to green guidance given in April-May 2024 and consists of 26 pages of text.
- Students are vocational teachers with Master's degree from various fields and teacher qualification. They have extensive work experience from their own vocational field and from teaching.



Methodology

- Qualitative content analysis (Silverman, 2000; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002).
- First, we analysed the data according to research questions.
- Secondly, we reflected the results to Packer's four-dimensional division of approaches to environmental sustainability.



Results: What is Green Guidance?

- Defining sustainable development and green guidance
 - The phenomenon of sustainable development is well-known
 - The term of green guidance remains rather unclear
- Interestingly, the transition to the green economy was seen as a wide phenomenon. However, consisting of limited ecological acts only:
 - Includes ecological, social, economic and cultural sustainability
 - The significance of sustainable development can be seen a process of ecological acts



Results: Green Guidance is seen as an important Challenge

- Ecological awareness is seen as an important factor in teaching and guidance, especially as a part of future change
 - Keeping up hope for a better life and more sustainable future is considered as a key factor among the respondents.
 - Green guidance and its' importance cannot necessarily be applied into thinking and practical methods and tools among the respondents.
- Challenges:
 - The aspects of ethical and moral choices were raised as a challenge
 - The age gap between generations was seen as an obstacle





Results: Green Guidance in practice

- There is a high variation of methods among respondents in putting sustainable development and green guidance into practice in counseling
- Guidance reflected the values of teachers and guidance counselors
 - Thus, there was seen a lack of equality in the actions related to green guidance
 - A need for a common understanding of the objectives and tools for accomplishing better results
 - Counseling should further encourage and promote sustainable development and green guidance values
- In regard to Green Guidance, there is a need for open dialogue among the counselors
 - There should be more emphasis on knowledge regarding the world of work and counselors' impact on sustainable development in the future

Results according to Packer's Approaches

- There were no clearly **radical approaches** in guidance.
- A few of the respondents' answers could be described as representing **the progressive approach**:

I see that green guidance guides us to consider the environmental effects of career choices and career development and to increase awareness of them. For example, someone who dreams of becoming a barber-hairdresser is told about the green alternative of the profession, i.e. eco-hairdressing. Green guidance should also take an active role in creating educational opportunities for sustainable development.

	Focus on society	Focus on individual
Focus on change DARK GREEN (Ecologism)	RADICAL (social change) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals to see social and environmental challenges as group – rather than just individual – challenges, e.g. through green critical pedagogy.	PROGRESSIVE (individual change) In careers practice this might look like: encouraging and empowering individuals to make individual career choices that take ecological wellbeing into account.
Focus on status quo LIGHT GREEN (Environmentalism)	CONSERVATIVE (social control) In careers practice this might look like: acting as a 'gatekeeper', assisting individuals to develop their skillset/attributes for a greener economy.	LIBERAL (non-directive) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals who are environmentally-minded to make career choices in line with their personal values and skillset.

Results according to Packer's Approaches

- **The conservative approach** could be detected among some of the respondents' replies:

Green guidance emphasises the identification of environmentally friendly and sustainable career options. In guidance, students are introduced to professions and fields that positively impact the environment and emphasise sustainable development.

Guidance's purpose is to help students develop skills and competencies related to sustainable development. These can include environmental management, ecological design, and other skills useful in a sustainable industry.

- **Liberal approach** was very common among the respondents as many of them based their guidance *in using dialogue as a major tool*:

Green guidance can also help individuals identify their own values and commit to an environmentally responsible lifestyle, and it can guide them towards careers that reflect these values. Guidance should emphasise the need to acquire knowledge and skills related to environmental management, ecological planning, and other aspects of sustainable development.

	Focus on society	Focus on individual
Focus on change DARK GREEN (Ecologism)	RADICAL (social change) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals to see social and environmental challenges as group – rather than just individual – challenges, e.g. through green critical pedagogy.	PROGRESSIVE (individual change) In careers practice this might look like: encouraging and empowering individuals to make individual career choices that take ecological wellbeing into account.
Focus on status quo LIGHT GREEN (Environmentalism)	CONSERVATIVE (social control) In careers practice this might look like: acting as a 'gatekeeper', assisting individuals to develop their skillset/attributes for a greener economy.	LIBERAL (non-directive) In careers practice this might look like: helping individuals who are environmentally-minded to make career choices in line with their personal values and skillset.



HAMK

Häme University
of Applied Sciences



REGIONAL
UNIVERSITY
NETWORK
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

Conclusions

- Sustainable Development and Green Guidance are mainly seen as separate sets of various ecological acts, such as recycling or energy savings.
- Theoretical understanding and individual interpretation of these phenomena can also be seen as somewhat diversified.
- Green Guidance should be understood and presented as a phenomenon being an essential part of successful future-oriented guidance and career counseling.
- There is a high demand for new thinking in green guidance and the necessity to provide new methods and tools for guidance counselors.
- This phenomenon requires more research.



References

- Packer, R. (2019). Greening HE careers education and guidance? An investigation into the perspectives and experiences of career development practitioners from English universities. Master's Thesis. University of Derby.
- Plant, P. (2015). Green guidance: guidance for the future. *REOP – Revista Española De Orientación Y Psicopedagogía*, 26(1), 115–123. <https://doi.org/10.5944/reop.vol.26.num.1.2015.14346>
- Plant, P. (2020). Paradigms under Pressure: Green Guidance. *Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance*, 1(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.25>
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research. A practical handbook*. Sage Publications.
- Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. (2002). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Tammi.

Thank you!



Vesa Parkkonen

MSc, MA, Senior Lecturer
vesa.parkkonen@hamk.fi



Päivi Pukkila

PhD, Principal Research
Scientist
paivi.pukkila@hamk.fi



Keijo Hakala

Master of Engineering,
Senior Lecturer
keijo.hakala@hamk.fi
