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**GREEN ECONOMY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT AWARENESS  
AMONGST BUSINESS STUDENTS**

Bachelor's thesis  
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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Due to the high population density of the world's population in the modern era, and as a result of more pollution being emitted on Earth and more resources being purposefully and not purposefully wasted, its inhabitants and resources are facing the reality of environmental changes that can result in a catastrophe if nothing is done.

This thesis work reveals the essence of the green economy and waste management awareness concepts. The green economy is viewed as a new path towards sustainable development, one that increases the Earth's longevity, protects natural resources, and benefits all living beings. The research problem is that TalTech business students appear to be unaware of the relevance of the green economy and waste management, which is vital not only for human well-being but also for the planet. The aim of this thesis work is to identify and evaluate the awareness of waste management and green economy amongst the business students in TalTech, and to increase the acknowledgement of the topic in general, as well as to get a broader overview of the current situation of how business students are aware of the topic from their own perspectives. The author uses the qualitative method by conducting semi-structured interviews on the Zoom platform of TalTech business students. According to the results obtained through the findings of the research, it is anticipated that business students have little to zero green economy concept awareness and TalTech's study programme does not completely acknowledge both the green economy and waste management concepts properly.

Keywords: green economy, waste management, awareness, TalTech business students

## **INTRODUCTION**

The global economy and the functioning of individual countries is undeniably linked to the principles of sustainable development, based on widespread application of sustainable economy concepts which are the fundamental issue of enhancing both the world economy and individual nations' operating. It is a major field for a number of further research and studies to be performed.

As a matter of fact, a new term and concept has already been created – the green economy. Green economy is not only a breakthrough in the economic world, but a novel science, a new knowledge base to be further examined. The green economy itself is focused on the close alignment of economic and environmental concerns, which constantly intercept with each other.

Due to the direct relationship between the "green economy" and environment, as well as its well-being and fertility, the connection between people and nature should not be overlooked and should be taken into account heavily in this thesis work. Because all people on Earth are connected to the planet's chain of life, their actions affect not just other humans co-living in the same environment, but also nature as a whole, including water, land, air, and other natural resources that are not unlimited, as was previously assumed. Nowadays people are aware of the scary truth that the natural resources given to us originally on Earth are not infinite and should be taken better care of by keeping them preserved.

Green economy serves as a basis for and a connection to concepts associated with both nature and economics, such as sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable economy, green growth, and conscious consumerism. The separation of nature and economics is fallacious and results in a variety of misconceptions and a lack of knowledge, which leads to a further number of problems such as unnecessary overproduction leading to pollution, which results in worsening the well-being of Earth and making human population more sick, as an example.

Thus, the study's relevance stems from the need to further develop the theoretical foundations for the formation of a green economy in the context of the world economy's and individual states' sustainable development, which is possible through business school students' awareness of the "green economy" and "waste management" topics.

While there are numerous works devoted to the problems of ecological economics and sustainable development, including the "green economy", there is still no concept that links together all aspects of this process, demonstrating the impact of the green economy on economic growth, and other factors that determine the significance of this study.

The author chose this research topic due to the author's strong commitment to living a conscious lifestyle and a genuine interest in investigating the green economy and waste management concepts' awareness amongst business students and what this knowledge of awareness can possibly offer from a long-term perspective to humankind.

The research problem is that awareness of the green economy and waste management seems to be very limited amongst students, while the issue and importance of the green economy and knowing about waste management are very crucial and even critical in some ways, not only for people's wellbeing but for planet Earth. According to the United Nations Environment Programme annual report of 2011 (UNEP 2011 annual report, 2012), the green economy concept can be described and defined as "A green economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive." This definition of the green economy demonstrates the significance of the topic chosen by the author for the research paper and illustrates the necessity of recognising the green economy as the solution to not only improve the well-being of people but also give a more stable and secure future for future generations. Given that business students at TalTech represent the next generation, it is necessary to raise their awareness of the green economy and waste management concepts.

The aim of this thesis work is to identify and evaluate the awareness of waste management and green economy amongst the business students in TalTech, and to increase the acknowledgement of the topic in general, as well as to get a broader overview of the current situation of how business students are aware of the topic from their own perspectives. The research questions used in this thesis work are as follows:

1. How do TalTech business students take into consideration the importance of waste management awareness and green economy concepts?
2. How do business students feel that they receive the needed acknowledgement of the topic at university and during its courses?

3. In what way do TalTech business students understand what this knowledge of awareness can possibly offer from a long-term perspective to humankind?

The research questions are intended to obtain more detailed and realistic data from TalTech business students, as well as to encourage them to develop an understanding of the importance of both green economy and waste management concepts.

The methodological part of the thesis work will be conducted through semi-structured online interviews, which are assumed to be one of the best methods for gathering qualitative data because they allow the interviewer to collect data directly from the interviewee while allowing the interviewee to answer questions freely, at their own pace, and provide comments during the interview. Due to the currently ongoing pandemic, the interviews will be performed entirely online. The interviewees will be undergraduate business students enrolled in courses taught by the professors of TalTech University in the department of International Business Administration.

The first chapter of the thesis is devoted to the research's theoretical component. The author will lay the theoretical groundwork for the research and introduce readers to the ideas of green economy, waste management, and their awareness from a business student's perspective. Additionally, several authors' definitions and theoretical perspectives will be provided. The second chapter will discuss the methodology section. A qualitative research method will be employed by introducing the research object, describing the method used, and justifying their selection. Qualitative data shall be displayed and described appropriately. The empirical analysis will be included in the third chapter. The results produced through the methodological section, as well as the addressed issues and conclusion, will be highlighted. The thesis work's final outcomes will include the results, discussion points, and conclusion, as well as providing the suggestions and possible recommendations for TalTech University to develop in the future. The thesis work will be concluded with the inclusion of a conclusion, a list of references, and an appendix section.

# **1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

This section of the thesis work is devoted to conducting a literature review on the subject of the study. The author divides the review of scientific literature into two sections: the essence of the green economy and the role of universities and business schools in the transition to raising student awareness of the green economy and waste management. The concepts of "green economy," "waste management awareness," and "sustainability" are examined in further detail. The purpose of this chapter is to familiarise the reader with the theoretical framework of the research, to connect the various authors' perspectives, to compare, synthesise, and contrast them, as well as to help the reader understand the significance of the research conducted.

## **1.1. Foundation of the green economy**

Numerous environmental, social, and economic issues are intertwined with the human condition. Being born, growing up, going through different emotions, life situations, getting experience of education and work, living a life and dying are all aspects of the human experience that are vital to human existence. The world's population and consumption are both rising, yet environmental protection is not getting enough attention.

According to the United Nations World Population Prospects (2019), the world's population will be about 8 billion people in 2020. In comparison, in 1800 the population was about 1 billion people (Roser, M.; Ritchie, H.; Ortiz-Ospina, E., 2013). Considering that the Earth's surface cannot be made any larger, this is an enormous and incredibly quick increase in population for which neither natural resources, nor Earth are ready for. The more crowded the Earth is, the higher the human consumption of resources is. As a result, more goods are produced, more garbage is generated, more landfills are constructed, and the standard of living worsens.

In order to avoid such scenarios, the United Nations back in the 1970s and 1980s created the concept of sustainable development - life without harm to future generations (World Population Prospects, 2017). The United Nations is a global organisation formed in 1945 following World War



II with the primary goal of restoring peace and uniting countries, as well as improving people's lives on Earth by ensuring the planet's long-term health and well-being. On this foundation, a "green economy" concept has started its further development.

## **1.2. Development of the green economy**

The first mention of the concept green economy and its definition is believed to be in *Blueprint for a Green Economy* in 1989 (Pearce, D. W.; Markandya, A.; Barbier, E. B., 1989). The environmentally conscious economists created a groundbreaking report for the Government of the United Kingdom with the purpose to identify if the meaning of "sustainable development" is agreed and to suggest for the United Kingdom. With a purpose to focus on a more sustainable economy development with further progress and results. It also looked into how sustainable development affects the way the UK measures economic progress and the way projects and policies are being judged. Surprisingly, the term "green economy" was only referenced once in the work's title and never again in the report (Pearce, D. W.; Markandya, A.; Barbier, E. B., 1989).

Later in 1991 and 1994 Pearce, Markandya and Barbier followed up the initial sequel study with *Blueprint 2: Greening the World Economy* and *Blueprint 3: Measuring Sustainable Development*. It is important to highlight that the core notion of the original *Blueprint* study was that economics can and should be utilised to improve environmental policy (Pearce, D. W.; Markandya, A.; Barbier, E. B., 1989). The following reports enlarged the message to call readers' attention to issues on a larger global scale, such as climatic changes, ozone layer depletion, tropical deforestation, and depletion of natural resources in developing nations. All of the papers are the result of decades of research and practise in environmental economics (Pearce, D. W.; Markandya, A.; Barbier, E. B., 1991), (Pearce, D. W.; Markandya, A.; Barbier, E. B., 1994).

The green economy's next critical stage occurred in 2008. Given the 14-year timeline, we may presume that development occurred at a slower rate and was not at the forefront of developing development challenges. The green economy term was a part of the discussion due to the multiple global crises ongoing, including the financial crisis and a possible global recession. The United Nations Environment Programme advocated for "green stimulus packages" and identified specific areas in which large-scale public investment could start a "green economy" (Atkisson, A. 2012). In fact, the ideas were heard and implemented in several countries with an ambition to recover the economical situation after the crisis. The United Nations Environment Programme started its Green

Economy Initiative in October 2008 to provide analysis and policy support for investments in environmentally friendly and polluting sectors (UNEP 2008 Annual Report, 2009).

As part of this the United Nations Environment Programme initiative, Edward Barombière and the sponsors of "Plan for a Green Economy" commissioned a single report which was released in June 2009. This forecast compared ideas that would stimulate economic recovery while also improving global economic performance. The New Global Green Deal targets specific funds in green industries in order to accomplish three goals:

1. Economic recovery
2. Poverty eradication
3. Emergence and destruction of an ecosystem that was not anticipated

Additionally, the course provided a foundation for developing green incentive programmes and promoting pro-green local and international policies. The United Nations published a statement in support of a green economy in June 2009, ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Additionally, the statement expressed the expectation that the economy's recovery through the greening of the brown economic development model would mark a watershed moment in humanity's evolution (UNDP Annual Report 2009, 2015).

In February 2010, at the United Nations Environment Programme Global Prime Ministerial Environment Forum in Nusa Dua, the Prime Ministers and Heads of Delegation acknowledged in a statement that the concept of a green economy has the potential to significantly address current challenges while also providing economic development opportunities and multiple benefits for all peoples (UNEP 2010 Annual Report, 2011).

Additionally, they recognised the United Nations Environment Programme's leadership role in refining and developing the vision and urged the organisation to continue this work as part of the planning process for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNEP 2010 Annual Report, 2011).

The United Nations General Assembly unanimously decided in March 2010 to make the green economy a central theme of this conference. This increased the international community's attention to the green economy, as evidenced by the increase in the number of publications on the subject. One of the crucial publications was the United Nations Environment Programme in November 2011 Green Economy report, which was released as part of the Green Economy Initiative. Notably, the

paper includes a working definition of the term "green economy," which has been quoted in a number of subsequent publications (UNEP 2011 Annual Report, 2012).

### **1.3. Concept and definition of the green economy**

The United Nations Environment Programme attempted for the first time in 2009 to define the term green economy. They described it as economic activities associated with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services that result in long-term improvements in human well-being while avoiding significant environmental risks and reducing environmental resource scarcity (UNEP 2009 Annual Report, 2010).

In 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme defined a green economy differently, as an economy that is resource-efficient based on low-carbon development that results in increased human well-being and social justice while considerably lowering environmental hazards and preventing biodiversity losses (UNEP 2011 Annual Report, 2012).

In the same year, in 2011, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development defined green economy as an economy that prioritises long-term social benefits in the short term and results in an increase in people's well-being and reduction of inequalities without leaving future generations to serious environmental risks and deficits (Trade and Development Report, 2011).

During the Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2011, the commission defined a green economy as one that is focused on maximising possibilities to advance economic and environmental goals simultaneously (The Future We Want, 2012). This means that there will be a significant increase in the number of chances for trading and trade flows in the economy. The greening of markets will allow the economy of even the poorest countries to strengthen and will enable the reduction of waste.

Based on this information, we may deduce that there is still no universally accepted meaning of the "green economy" concept, necessitating the conduct of additional research. The author feels compelled to emphasise that all of the preceding definitions of green economy concepts agree on the fact that the goal of a green economy is to improve society's well-being through reduced pressure on the ecosystem, and that a green economy seeks balance between social policy, economics, and ecology.

## 1.4. Sustainability and the green economy

As a result of the green economy's association with such terms as sustainability and sustainable development, the author feels compelled to discuss the relationship between sustainability and the green economy. To accomplish this, the author will define the concept of sustainability.

Sustainability, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development, can be defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987).

The Brundtland Report of 1987 addressed issues of sustainability and introduced the notion of sustainable development and methods for achieving it. In order to be sustainable, three components must be considered: social, ecological, and economic. If one of these aspects is not taken into consideration or does not complete its purpose as it originally should, sustainability is put to an end, and the term "unsustainability" is used instead. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction and correlation of three essential components of sustainability.

The following figure (see Figure 1) illustrates the components of sustainability:



Figure 1.

Source: Made by the author

Social sustainability refers to the society as a whole, including work, education, living conditions, and opportunity equality for all individuals, as well as the society's development. Economic sustainability is concerned with the economy's growth, profitability, and cost-cutting measures. Ecological sustainability is concerned with the environment, natural resources, their conservation and management, as well as the protection of nature and pollution.

Thus, the essence of sustainability involves the social, economic, and ecological components of the concept's operational mechanism and so does the green economy. This demonstrates that the green economy and sustainability concerns are inextricably linked and coexist with each other.

### **1.5 The role of Universities and Business Schools in the transition to a green economy**

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014: The DESD at a Glance, 2005) asserts that universities have the potential to play a significant role in the transition to a green economy system. Green economy ideas, concepts and principles have been actively implemented for a number of years in several leading universities such as Oxford, Harvard, and the London School of Economics, among others. Several examples of what is being introduced and incorporated into study programmes include ecotechnologies, eco-education development, environmental campaigns, and environmental issues.

Based on the official Cambridge University website (The Cambridge Green Challenge), the University of Cambridge is home to the Living Lab for Sustainability, a space where students and faculty can collaborate to discover solutions for the university's greening perspectives and solutions. Interestingly, Cambridge University motivates and encourages participation of both staff and students for the reason that staff is meant to be an inspiration and a guide through education time for the students.

There is also an existing international association dedicated to advancing sustainability in higher education, such as the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (About AASHE 2020), which brings together the world's leading educational institutions. Additionally, there are "green" university rankings available at the worldwide level, such as UI GreenMetric World University Sustainability Ranking. Based on Suwartha and Berawi (2019), "The

rankings evaluate universities according to six categories: 1) university landscape (setting and infrastructure), 2) electricity consumption (energy and climate change), 3) waste management, 4) water preservation, 5) green transportation for public, and 6) education and research related to sustainability". Thus, the amount of sustainable niches that UI covers makes it a very valuable and useful measurement system.

Green economy innovations can be developed and tested initially in universities before being duplicated in the real world. As a result, universities and business schools will serve as prototypes for the green economy. On the foundation of Universities, such as TalTech University, it is necessary to conduct educational programmes which will enable to build the professional abilities required for the green economy, and produce environmental innovations or green technology. Secondly, Universities and Business Schools can not only produce green economy technologies (infrastructure, social, managerial, and other green economy solutions), but also replicate them. Thirdly, incorporating green economy technologies into Universities has a number of benefits for the institutions themselves:

1. Green technologies can be incorporated into educational programmes and further scientific research.
2. The implementation of the green economy technologies enables students and educational employees to develop appropriate value orientations, thereby contributing to the development of university culture.
3. Small innovative enterprises (startups) can be formed on the basis of scientific and applied developments in the field of green technologies.
4. Green solutions can help improve the environment.

The implementation of such concepts as the green economy and waste management provides a chance for the formation of young leaders and the future elite, who will comprehend the significance of the transition to the principles of a green economy by participating in practice-oriented activities. Simultaneously, a considerable scaling impact can be produced on the basis of Universities, allowing effective practices to extend outside the University and this way preserving the Earth, its resources and saving all living creatures.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this part of the thesis work the author introduces the study object, explains the purpose of the studies conducted, describes and supports the research methodology used. The methodological part of the research is done based on a qualitative method of data gathering via semi-structured interviews by interviewing TalTech business students. The research methodology part will be divided into 2 parts: planning the research and data collection and its analysis.

### **2.1. Planning the research**

The purpose of the conducted research is to determine whether Taltech business students are aware of the concepts of the green economy and waste management, as well as to determine whether TalTech University plays any role in developing student awareness of the green economy and waste management concepts.

The research is done through a qualitative method because the main focus of the study is business students at TalTech University and their awareness of the green economy and waste management. This includes students' attitudes, experiences, personal perspectives, and awareness of specific points of the questions about the green economy and waste management concepts. Such important people-related factors cannot be measured in numbers, as the answers during the interview are also not given in numbers by the students, that is why the author chose the qualitative approach.

Attributed to the reason that the methodology section of the thesis was entirely done using the qualitative research technique, the author describes the qualitative research's conceptual framework to assist readers in better understanding why this particular method was used and what it is about.

Based on Ingham-Broomfield, B. (2014 cited Borbasi and Jackson 2012), "Qualitative research is used to examine subjective human experience by using non-statistical methods of analysis" and Ingham-Broomfield, B. (2014 cited Moxham 2012), "It is associated with naturalistic inquiry which explores the complex experience of human beings". That is, qualitative analysis is more concerned with words than with numbers and places a priority on the human being and his or her experience.

Additionally, Ingham-Broomfield, B. (2014 cited Burns and Grove 2009), "Whereas quantitative research is based on scientific method, qualitative research suits behavioural and social sciences as it aids in understanding the unique nature of human beings". This definition demonstrates how qualitative analysis varies from quantitative analysis by emphasising the uniqueness of people and everything associated with them, such as the behavioural and sociological elements that influence them.

Assuming that the methodology section of the thesis work was based on semi-structured interviews with TalTech business students, the methodology was entirely centred on people, their attitudes, experiences, personal perspectives, and acknowledgment of specific questions asked during the interviews. Concentrating on individuals contributed in the creation of comfortable settings for interviewees by making them, their attitudes, experiences, personal viewpoints, and acknowledgment of specific questions, the primary centre of attention during the process of the interview. This way, TalTech business students can feel more that their voices and perspectives are heard, and their understanding of the concepts underlying the thesis work topic can contribute not only to the author's thesis work, but also to their personal lifestyles and awareness of green economy and waste management concepts.

In this thesis work, the method of purposive representative selection or purposive sampling was utilised. Based on Etikan, I.; Musa, S. A. and Alkassim, R. S. (2016), purposive sampling refers to "the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience".

The author chose purposive sampling for a variety of reasons. To begin, because the sample was limited to TalTech University business students and not to anybody else, as the focus is solely on the TalTech University business field of specialisation students. Secondly, the students were purposefully picked from various years of study in order to extend the perspective and possible data obtained during the research. These criteria increase the author's chances of conducting high-quality research.

The sample included students from TalTech University's business field in two of the three possible years of education, including first-year and third-year students only. All business students had in



common that they studied at TalTech University's business faculties, whether they had previously chosen their major specialisation or not. Five interviewees were included in the sample.

These five interviewees were included in the sample as they perfectly fit the requirements of the thesis work research conducted and purpose stated by the author: "The aim of this thesis work is to identify and evaluate the awareness of waste management and green economy amongst the business students in TalTech, and to increase the acknowledgement of the topic in general, as well as to get a broader overview of the current situation of how business students are aware of the topic from their own perspectives". All of the sample group are: business students, studying to get business education, study at TalTech University, take courses provided by TalTech University and it is TalTech University that is able to educate students about the green economy and waste management concepts. Consequently, the author is committed to analysing, collecting data, and determining whether Taltech business students are familiar with green economy and waste management concepts, as well as determining whether TalTech University plays a role in increasing student awareness of green economy and waste management concepts.

## **2.2. Data collection and analysis**

Primary sources were used to accomplish the data gathering process because secondary sources cannot speak for TalTech business students' awareness of green economy and waste management concepts. Additionally, secondary sources are also unable to speak for TalTech University's perspective if it is to fulfil its duty as a developer of student awareness of green economy and waste management concepts.

Semi-structured interviews were also chosen for being the most versatile method of data collection for the purpose put by the author. In other words, semi-structured interviews are believed to be set already at the beginning of it but the mobility of the style of the interviews remains highly strong and allows for changes if needed.

The author designed and organised semi-structured interviews while adhering to the required interview conduct rules, which include informing interviewees about their responses and having the entire interview transcribed and audio recorded with their permission, as well as allowing potential interviewees to decide whether or not to volunteer and participate in the research interview, which is not mandatory and must be done at the interviewees' request only. Otherwise, it would be very

incorrect and unfair towards the respondents and their right to have a choice of participating in the research interview data gathering or not.

Data collected by the author during the semi-structured interview also followed the ethical issues so strictly described by Khan, S. N. (2014 cited Neuman 2011) who claimed that "Ethics begins and ends with you, the researcher". Stating that the researcher is the one who is fully in charge and responsible for the research procedures and the ethical way that the research work must be followed. The idea of this quote was also highlighted even more by Khan, S. N. (2014 cited Neuman 2011) "It is the moral and professional obligation of the individual researcher to be ethical even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics". This means that, regardless of whether the interviewees are the focus of attention during the interview's conduct, it is the researcher who bears the greatest burden of responsibility and who is in control of the ethical standards to be observed during the interview's conduct.

The aim of completing the semi-structured interview was the purpose to gather research related data for the further thesis work processes to be completed. The author collected data from first- and third-year TalTech business students solely, in order to focus the research on individuals who begin or complete their business education at TalTech University. The data collected from the semi-structured interview is accurate, new and related to the thesis overall topic of the green economy and waste management concepts awareness amongst business students.

To conduct the interview more professionally, the author followed a set of steps, including devoting time to planning and structuring the interview, which ensured that the interview was conducted at an appropriate University-approved level, as well as making sure that the asked questions to the interviewees' were easy to follow, and that the questions themselves were structured in a logical manner, allowing the author to delve deeper into the green economy and waste management awareness concepts from the business students perspective. After conducting the interviews, the author took time to analyse, structure, and categorise the data acquired, as well as demonstrating that the data gathered results may be trusted and utilised in the thesis work's discussion section.

While conducting the interview, the author utilised suitable language and expressed gratitude to the interviewees by thanking them for their time and explaining the framework of the interview so that the business students felt more at ease when speaking. The author also looked into the audio format and how it worked by first evaluating the sound quality before conducting and recording the interviews. This is because the author takes full responsibility for the interview and its quality and wants the TalTech business students to enjoy the interviewing process and focus on their answers,

standpoints, feelings, thoughts and acknowledgement of the topics of green economy and waste management awareness only.

During the interview the author used different types of questions to accomplish several goals. Firstly, the introductory questions, to introduce the topic and to go into more specific details of the green economy and waste management related topics, to acquire the standpoints of business graduates and their thoughts. The author also used core questions which act as basic but profound questions to bring to the interviewees the overall understanding of the researched topic. To be more specific, the author used Introducing, Follow-up, Specifying, and Core topic related questions because the author wanted to be accurate and valid in the data obtained from research conducted by her.

The interviews were performed entirely online using the Zoom platform, with no need for video; only audio and transcripts of the audio were used in the study. Because of the still-going pandemic she had a number of University classes spent in Zoom mode, the author was able to develop substantial Zoom abilities and was sure of being able to manage interviews being conducted online.

The interviews lasted an average of seven minutes. The interviews were done in English because all interviewees are TalTech business students enrolled in the Department of International Business Administration and their primary language of instruction is English and each student interviewed had no difficulty expressing their perspectives, thoughts, emotions, and experiences related to the green economy and waste management awareness. As previously indicated, the author accepted full responsibility for the interviews conducted with business students and not only acknowledged that the interviews should be taped and transcribed, but also requested permission from the participants. Thus, the author did not violate any ethical rules governing the conduct of interviews at the TalTech University level. Additionally, the author contacted each interviewee by personal student email and informed them that the interview responses would be confidential; each of the five participants expressed agreement and approval that they, too, wanted the interviews to be anonymous.

The interviews began with the interviewees being greeted, followed by a brief introduction to the concept and structure of the interview, followed by some Introducing questions, followed by Follow-up and Core questions, as well as some additional Specifying questions. At the end of the interview the author concluded and expressed gratitude to TalTech business students for participating in the research interview. The author generated thirteen questions for the conducted interviews (Appendix 1), as well as the framework of the interviews included in the Appendix section. Due to the lack of research data obtained before the author began her own research, the

author had to create the questions and structure for the interviews on the topic of green economy and waste management awareness among TalTech business students. The author created the interview questions and structure in order to collect honest and reliable research data from the primary source - TalTech business students. The interviews were conducted utilising Zoom's recording technology and were manually transcribed by the author afterwards.

To ensure that interviews are performed professionally and in accordance with TalTech University norms, the author produced the following figure (see Figure 1) outlining the author's actions at the start, during and after the interview:

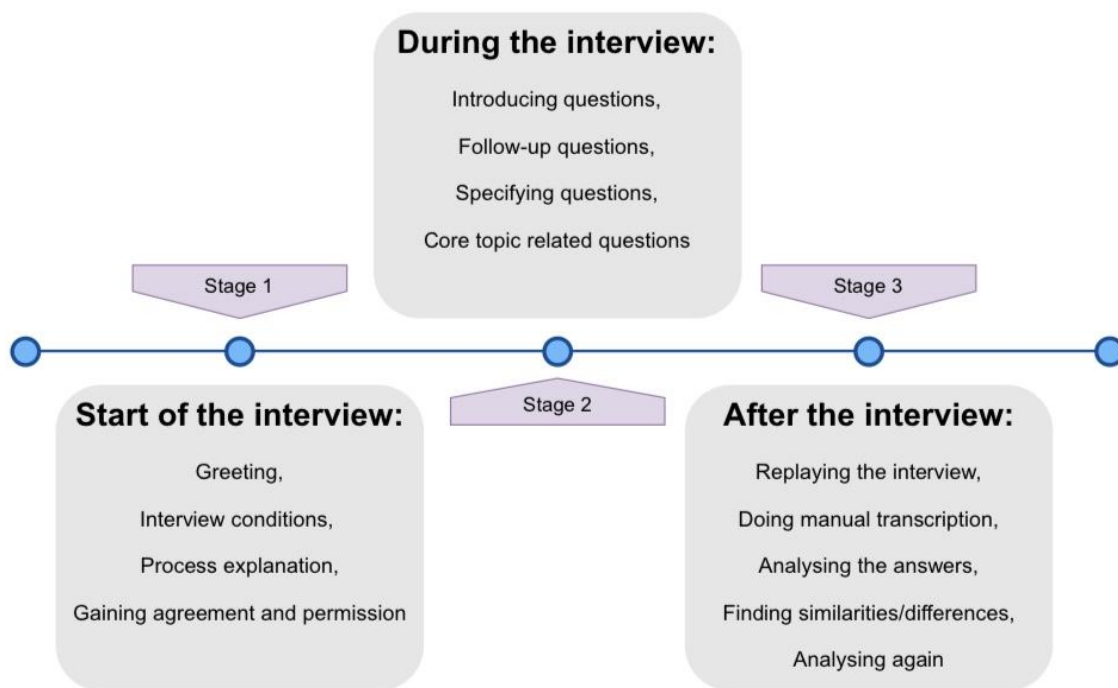


Figure 1.

Source: Made by the author

The author conducted the analysis by replaying the interviews in their entirety or in selected segments, rereading the full or selected portions of the manual transcripts, analysing and summarising similarities or differences between the interviewees' responses, reanalyzing them, and finally moving and transforming the data obtained and analysed into the empirical analysis, which included results, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

The following section of the thesis is Results and Discussion, in which the author discusses the findings, discussions, conclusions, and additional recommendations.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this part of the thesis work the author summarises the findings of the conducted research in this chapter, by diving more deep into each of the research questions, including the results and discussion of the data acquired via semi-structured interviews with TalTech business students. The author also concludes by giving recommendations and suggestions to TalTech University.

In total, five interviews were conducted, including three interviewees being third year students and the two other ones being first year students, which gave some variety to some of the answers that were received during the interviews. Four of the five interviewees had chosen, or were considering to choose, either marketing or entrepreneurship as their specialisation and one was still unsure about which specialisation to choose, meaning no students of finance or accounting majors were interviewed during the semi-structured interviews of TalTech Business students.

#### **3.1 Consideration of the importance of waste management awareness and green economy concepts**

The author was able to find out that not a lot of students know what the green economy concept is. When asked whether or not the student was familiar with the concept of the green economy, all five replied that they did not really know what it is all about, or at the very least that their knowledge on this concept is very limited. However, when the author asked the interviewees what they believe it means, the consensus could be seen, with words such as sustainability and environment being heard in every student's answer, indicating that all five students have at least a minor idea of what the concept of the green economy is related to.

*“I think the green economy means the economy in the world but done in a way that is ecological and sustainable, or keeping these things in mind, for the sake of a better future for our world.” –*

Interview 1

*“I think green economy means the combination of activities which are targeted for sustainability, like recycling, waste management and stuff like that, I guess.” – Interview 2*

*“I would say that this is the process of making our world better by developing the sustainability and creating a better infrastructure.” – Interview 3*

*“I would say that it’s a process of developing the world in a sustainable way and not only in a monetary way.” – Interview 5*

One of the questions presented to the interviewees was whether or not they participate in the recycling process. All participants had favourable responses and claimed that they recycle at least on some level. The author found it interesting, how a slight difference of sexes could be noticed in the replies, interviewees two, three and five being female and numbers one and four being male, with the females seemingly being more assertive in the fact that they do recycle, whereas the males said to be trying to participate in recycling as much as possible.

*“I do, I, well, at least I try to. I try to sort my waste products by material, so for example plastics with plastics, papers with papers, metals with metals and so on. I try to do that but sometimes I don’t really succeed.” – Interview 1*

*“And right now, what I am doing is I’m collecting plastic, paper, into separate pockets, separate bags and then I send them out to recycling as well.” – Interview 2*

*“Yes, do participate in it. I usually recycle my bottles by bringing them to Prisma and I also try to recycle the clothes I don’t really use.” – Interview 3*

*“Only a little. I recycle used plastic and metal bottles and try not to litter much. But other than that, I don’t think I participate in any other activities.” – Interview 4*

It was also clear to the author that all five interviewees have the subject of sustainability on their mind in their day-to-day life, that they are trying to make environmentally conscious decisions such as carrying their own reusable shopping bags instead of taking a plastic one from the store, carrying a reusable water bottle instead of single-use bottles, as well as being acknowledged about recycling and preferring the usage of products with less wasteful packaging.

However, the author was left under the impression that despite their best efforts, the students could be doing a lot more, and perhaps would be willing to do a lot more for their share of waste

management and green economy participation, if the correct education, information and infrastructure would be more available and much more acknowledged about the concepts of green economy and waste management awareness.

### **3.2 Receiving the needed acknowledgement of the topic at university and during its courses**

The author started the interview process by asking the interviewees if they actually are students at TalTech University and at what stage of their studies they currently are. All five interviewees were either first- or third-year bachelor's students at TalTech University. One of the questions the author posed to the business students was how they felt about education, specifically how they felt about TalTech University's study programmes and courses, and whether they feel that TalTech University is actually playing its educational role in such concepts as the green economy.

For this question, the author was able to identify the split between first and third year students, with both first year students saying it has been briefly mentioned during one course, but not really going much in depth into the topic and it should be taught more. Two out of the three third year students replied with a simple yes, saying that they feel they receive the needed acknowledgement from the university, one third year student agreed that the topic should be better integrated into the studies.

*“Well, we definitely have received some education around this topic, but not exactly so I think the green economy could be more better implemented into the studies.”* – Interview 1, 3rd year student

*“I think yes, I definitely do.”* – Interview 2, 3rd year student

*“I believe not that much because we had a course that is named ergonomics and this was the only one where we got to know some things about the environment. But all in all, there were no such courses where we were told about the sustainability and how we can make our world better, so I believe that we should have more of them.”* – Interview 3, 1st year student

*“I believe we’ve had a course in the first semester of the first year, where we slightly went over some problems, environmental problems, and even offered solutions but it was only for a few seminars and it was nothing major.”* – Interview 4, 1st year student

*“Yes.”* – Interview 5, 3rd year student



The short answers of interviewees two and five left the author thinking that perhaps the students recall the topic being mentioned, but since it was never taught more in depth, they could not provide more details to their answers of this question.

### **3.3 Understanding what this knowledge of awareness can possibly offer from a long-term perspective to humankind**

All participants in the interview seemed to understand not only the potential effect, but also the importance of waste management and the concepts of green economy, understanding that if manufacturing and waste generation continues the way it has been doing for the last decades, life on earth will get very difficult as ecosystems are being destroyed and tarnished.

*“From a long-term perspective, I think it would get people to think in a more ecological way, it would get people to do their duties, if you could call it that”* – Interview 1

*“And if everything was recycled, that would be perfect for humankind”* – Interview 2

*“From a long-term perspective, I think it would get people to think in a more ecological way, it would get people to do their duties, if you could call it that”* – Interview 1

*“Well, I think it could offer more sustainable, and more mindful ways of living and saving our nature from humanity, as we all need to be mindful and aware of what’s happening worldwide.”* – Interview 4

*“In long-term it’s very crucial to start implementing some serious green economic ideas into development.”* – Interview 5

### **3.4 Discussion**

After analysing the research gathered results, the author identified a number of similarities in the answers of the interviewees. Firstly, all students are acknowledged for the recycling process and to some extent participate in it, especially in plastic and metal bottles and cans recycling. Secondly, all of the business students have a concept of sustainability in their minds, as an example, both Interviewees number two and number five stated that they are using their own bags instead of buying the new plastic ones which they claimed to be good for the ecology.

However, the author was not expecting and was surprised that there seems to be a little gender variation in the responses, with the ladies being more forceful in stating that they recycle, while the males were claimed to be striving to recycle as much as possible.

The study has revealed that little is known about the green economy among the students. When asked if they understood the concept of the green economy, all five students stated that they did not or only partly assume what it is. All students were mentioning words like sustainability and environment in their responses, but in particular the lack of description of the concept of the green economy when asking the business students how they would describe it, or what they think the green economy is proved the author's expectations that the awareness level of the green economy is little to zero.

The findings of the study revealed a lack of awareness of the green economy concept among TalTech business students, and as a result, it is assumed that the study programme at TalTech Universities does not fully fulfil the role of acknowledging both the green economy and waste management awareness concepts. It was proved by students that the knowledge of green economy is unfortunately almost zero and this means that TalTech has to reconsider its study programmes in terms of green economy and waste management awareness.

But, as a matter of fact, by the end of the interviews, all TalTech Business students did agree with the statement that after conducting the interview they feel more acknowledged of the concepts of the green economy and waste management than before. This means that the author managed to successfully complete the aim of the research by acknowledging business students on the green economy and waste management concepts and ideas.

### **3.5. Recommendations**

The author proposes several recommendations to be taken into consideration by TalTech University with a goal of building a better understanding and a stronger knowledge base of the green economy conceptual framework, as well as becoming the link of providing the green economy and waste management awareness knowledge to its business students:

1. Organising and promoting more green economy-related projects among TalTech University students and students from other universities and business schools, educational institutions can serve as a purposeful source of green economy awareness education for students and enable them to communicate with one another about such serious issues. This will provide an opportunity for business students to form new friendships and encourage students to encourage and appreciate one another about green economy and waste management awareness.
2. One more possible alternative suggestion made by the author is to incorporate more green economy-related courses into the International Business Administration Programme in order to provide TalTech Business Students with additional green economics concepts, principles, and ideas to pursue further research. Such courses will proceed to serve as a source of knowledge on green economy and waste management awareness by providing TalTech business students not only with concepts of green economy or waste management awareness, but also with ideas on how to implement the concepts into their daily lives in order to improve their well-being and act as Earth's friend by living a more sustainable lifestyle.
3. Another suggestion is to organise a voluntary activist club at TalTech University for international students where they can discuss green economy and waste management, their points of view, thoughts, and exchange ideas on how they can impact the environment and live a more sustainable lifestyle by recycling and caring about the consequences of their actions in terms of the Earth's long-term health, as this is what their University stands for. Perhaps with this club, students can create their own events and recruit others to participate.

Along with the suggestions the author expresses her deepest interest in acknowledging TalTech business students of the concepts of green economy and waste management awareness as the author truly believes in the success of the green economy concept work in a long-term perspective with TalTech University playing a crucial role in it. The author highly recommends TalTech University to take into strong consideration the suggestions provided by the author.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis work was to identify and evaluate the awareness of waste management and green economy amongst the business students in TalTech, and to increase the acknowledgement of the topic in general, as well as to get a broader overview of the current situation of how business students are aware of the topic from their own perspectives.

As a result of the research conducted, certain common answers of the interviewees were distinguished. All students are aware of and participate in recycling, especially plastic bottles and metal cans. Each business student was also acknowledged with the sustainability concept, and all five respondents were mentioning terms like sustainability and environment. However, students' knowledge of the green economy is lacking. When asked if they understood the concept of a green economy, all five students responded "no" or "only somewhat." Because business students were unable to define or characterise the green economy, the author's assumption that the level of awareness was low to zero was confirmed. The study's findings state TalTech's study curriculum does not fully embrace both the green economy and waste management concepts.

On the other hand, after the interviews, all TalTech Business students agreed that they felt more familiar with the principles of green economy and waste management than previously, which had a positive impact on the research conducted and the author managed to accomplish the purpose of the research and thesis work in general.

The authors' main concern is that if the facts are raised that humans and the planet's resources might face environmental catastrophes because of increasing population densities in the contemporary period, as well as more pollutants being emitted and more resources being consciously and unintentionally wasted, and if we highlight the green economy and waste management awareness concepts as a possible solution to global problems, there should be a stronger approach and motivation used by TalTech University when promoting the ideas of sustainable development, including the highly essential and important role of bringing up the levels of students' awareness of not only the waste management topic but the green economy as well, as it is critically important for the future of the planet Earth's and the whole humankind wellbeing.

As a possible solution and suggestion, the author proposes to organise more green economy related projects within the TalTech University students and students of other Universities and Business Schools, this will be helpful the educational places to act as a purposeful source of green economy awareness education for students and will allow them to acknowledge one another on such serious matters.

One more important suggestion is the organisation of an activist club at TalTech University for international students to discuss green economy and waste management, their perspectives, and ideas on how to impact the environment and live a more sustainable lifestyle by recycling and caring about the long-term health of the Earth. With this club, students can organise events and invite others to join this way they will encourage more and more students to join.

Last but not least, one another possible suggestion stated by the author is the idea of implementing more green economy-related topics into the International Business Administration Programme in order to give more green economics concepts, principles and ideas for the further research of TalTech Business Students. It must persuade the thought that students are the future graduates and they are the future of the planet Earth. Future generations will undeniably depend on us, our environmental attitudes, recycling choices, and green economic concept awareness as it is one of the best possible solutions to humankind's and Earth's further existence.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Interview structure

1. Are you a business student at TalTech University?
2. At what stage of your studies at university are you currently?
3. What is your major specialisation at Taltech University, or if you have not chosen yet, which one do you think you will choose?
4. Are you familiar with the concept of the green economy?
5. If yes, how would you explain the definition of the green economy? If not, what do you think the green economy means?
6. Are you acknowledged with the concept of waste management, recycling particularly?
7. Do you participate in the recycling process and how?
8. Do you pay attention to your lifestyle in terms of your actions towards the green economy and waste management and how?
9. Have you heard of the United Nations and their annual report?
10. Do you feel that you have received and still receive the needed acknowledgement of the topics of green economy and waste management at TalTech university and during its courses?
11. Now I will state some facts regarding the green economy and waste management awareness and you will need to tell me if you have heard of them by saying yes, or if you have not heard of them by saying no.
  - a. There is no just one and only commonly accepted definition of the green economy concept.
  - b. The green economy itself is all about the close relationship between economic and environmental concerns, which always intercept with each other.
  - c. Green economy started its development in 1989
  - d. There was a 14 years gap between 1994 and 2008 of green economy concept development.
  - e. The United Nations plays a critical role in the green economy development, by doing annual reports and participating in conferences which include topics of green economy, waste management and their awareness.



- f. Universities play a crucial role in raising students' awareness about green economy and waste management when implementing related subjects to study programmes and educating students.
12. How do you feel about all of the things that we have just spoken about?
  13. What do you think the knowledge of awareness of green economy and waste management can possibly offer from a long-term perspective to humankind?
  14. Did this interview provide you with new information regarding the green economy and waste management?
  15. Do you feel that now you are more acknowledged and aware of the green economy and waste management concepts?

## **Appendix 2. Interview transcripts**

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