

Sustainable careers: Navigating career options for a resilient and sustainable future

Author: Liz Painter

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Reviewed by **Korin Grant**, Assistant Professor, University of Warwick, UK.

In a world increasingly shaped by climate urgency, political unrest and transformation, Liz Painter's *Sustainable Careers* arrives as a timely and enabling guide for practitioners supporting young people to prepare for the future. As a former science teacher and career development professional, the author is in prime position to offer informed insights. Whether you are a career development professional, a careers leader, a teacher, or simply someone curious about green jobs, this book offers a clear, practical and thoughtful roadmap to navigating the evolving landscape of sustainable work. Painter widens the net beyond 'green jobs' to focus on three themes within the broader topic of sustainable careers.

The dominant theme is *sustainability and careers* and deals with questions such as what do we mean by green careers, how can we define green skills and, where can I find green jobs? Painter provides case studies, world of work examples and links to lesser-known job sites to support the search for roles aligned to sustainability. The book also helpfully defines what is meant by green jobs, how these can be categorised and what this tells us about green transition in the labour market. If, like me, you would benefit from learning fundamentals about the energy and waste sector, carbon budgets, circular economy and more, then this book has the overview you need.

The second theme looks at how we can support young people to develop a *sustainable career*, meaning a life of decent work that encompasses wellbeing, happiness and productivity. In this Painter calls on the work of De Vos et al (2020) and explores the complexity of careers. She also introduces the concept of green guidance as a method for encouraging clients to consider how careers can help them to do good and feel good.

The third theme focuses on how we *teach about sustainability* and how we can *teach for sustainability*. Here we find familiar learning frameworks and career development models mapped to UN sustainable development goals and a selection of resources aimed at those working in schools and colleges. There is a detailed case study of an academy with sustainability at the heart of its operations *and* curriculum which brings ideas to life and offers practical advice to consider.

Along the way I learned several interesting facts which informed and sometimes delighted me. The energy sector supports one in fifty jobs in the UK (a figure predicted to rise nearly 50% by 2050). The NHS contributes 4% of our carbon output, some of which is attributed to asthma inhalers. And urine waste from a product called Peequal (look out for them at your next festival!) is being re-purposed as fertiliser.

Key strengths of the book are the pitch, practical style and resources. Throughout you will find clear language, helpful definitions, and an organised approach to the various topics. The author takes an optimistic, yet grounded tone which is welcome and acknowledges the tension between sustainability goals and the realities of accessing the modern labour market. There are practical tools for educators and career development professionals, including classroom-ready scenarios. At times I wished I had access to an electronic copy of the book to make better use of the many web links provided.

What the book is not, is a detailed venture into career theory and models that link with sustainability or green guidance methods. Painter acknowledges this and still manages to cover a number of approaches, frameworks and examples, such as Dimsits and Hooley's five dimensions for environmentally sustainable career guidance (2024). She also provides a brief but insightful guide to well established career theories relevant to sustainability.

The book is concise without sacrificing depth. It's a must-read for those guiding the next generation on career decisions —and a helpful text for anyone who believes that work should be both meaningful and mindful of our planet's future.



References

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Dimsits, M., & Hooley, T. (2024, 2-3rd July). Introduction to the framework of environmentally sustainable career guidance: The five dimensions. *Career and sustainability*. NICEC conference 2024, Birmingham. <https://www.nicec.org/pages/2024-conference-videos>