

## Book reviews

**Title:** A History of the Careers Services in the UK from 1999

**Author:** Edited by Dr Michelle Stewart

**Publisher:** NICEC via Lulu.com

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Reviewed by **Siobhan Neary**, Head of iCeGS and Professor of Career Development Practice.

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Dr Michelle Stewart has taken on the unenviable task of trying to encapsulate both the evolution of careers education and guidance within the UK since the millennium while simultaneously making it accessible to readers. This edited collection, written in the main by NICEC Fellows, starts where David Peck's 2004 book 'Careers Services, history, policy and practice in the United Kingdom' ended. Collectively the two books provide a comprehensive history of the careers service from 1902 to 2023.

A history of the Careers Services in the UK from 1999 explores the various parts of the careers sectors; young people, adults and HE using the lens of each home nation. This provides an in-depth exploration of the differentiation between the four home nations (England, Northern Ireland Scotland, and Wales) and how services have developed to meet local economic, social and education policy requirements. This is especially pertinent as three countries have designed systems that deliver all age guidance, and one that continues to have a differentiated model with services designed specifically for young people and adults (England). Through adopting a country approach the authors demonstrate the difficulties that exist when considering the career system in the UK, but also highlight the challenges that are endemic to public funded careers provision regardless of geographical location.

Each chapter, written by country experts, offers an historical perspective of the influences and policy that have shaped the establishment of the services as they are in 2023. They each focus on issues that are pertinent, impactful and influential to how the services have

evolved. England is the focus in chapter one and has an additional section which examines career related learning in primary schools, which was linked to policy dating back to the mid 1980's. The focus on Connexions, which was hugely influential on services in England, offers an insight into the aspirational goals of a government committed to addressing social disadvantage. The ripple effect of the service after it was disbanded is still felt, specifically in relation to professional training for career development practitioners. The chapter focusing on Northern Ireland draws a distinction with the other UK nations due to structural and service delivery arrangements as part of the Civil Service. It presents an interesting contrast to the other nations delivering all age guidance services. The chapter on Scotland outlines the strategic transition of Careers Scotland to Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the redesign to focus on economic growth and deliver high levels of employment. It exemplifies the relationship between policy and practice and the application of the SDS Career Management Skills Framework which aimed to inform and shape individuals demand for support. Within the chapter on Wales there is an interesting discussion about bilingualism and the need to provide services through the medium of Welsh. This required a dedicated investment in supporting careers advisers working for Careers Wales as well as in Higher Education to upgrade their language skills. The book ends with a postscript which considers what has happened since 2020, specifically the impact of Covid-19 on service and future policy focus.

Although this is a history book in many ways it is more than that. It offers a view of how neoliberal policies have been adopted and adapted to varying degrees within but differently across four nations. Through demonstrating how public funded services can be created and aligned to meet local policy needs we have a framework of models which work to a greater or lesser degree.

This book will be attractive to those of us who have an interest in the history and the identity of our profession. It is highly accessible and well written by authors who can help us to understand the policy imperatives and how they have been implemented. The structure focusing on the different countries works well, but an introduction to each chapter would have been welcome to set the scene for the country and the variations of topic that are addressed within each. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, I learned a lot about our neighbours and the good practice which exists across the British Isles.



**Title:** STEM Careers (2nd Edition)

**Author:** Liz Painter

**Publisher:** Trotman Indigo Publishing Ltd

**Publication Year:** 2024

**Number of pages:** 172

**ISBN:** 9781911724186

**Price:** £22.99

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Reviewed by **Dr Michelle Stewart**, NICEC Fellow.

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STEM Careers is an up-to-date guide to career opportunities in science, technology, engineering and maths. Its author, Liz Painter is a qualified careers development professional who has transferred her skills and experience as a former science teacher with great effect.

Logically structured over 12 chapters, the book provides everything you need to know about careers in science, engineering and maths, allowing the reader to quickly identify the information that is most relevant to them depending on where they are in their career journey. For those at the start of their journey it considers 'Is STEM for me?' with information about different pathways, while for those already decided it supports the exploration of alternative roles and the development of career research skills. Across the book references are made to useful websites, with many opportunities brought to life through the use of case studies (career stories) that include roles requiring different levels of qualification, from level 3 to doctoral studies. At the end of each chapter is a 'reflection' box to help the reader to think further about what they have learnt.

A strength of the book is the style and tone of the writing making it easily accessible to young people and adults, including parents/carers, teachers and career professionals. This also serves to actively encourage their participation in exploring careers in STEM, from finding out about the different sectors, to preparing personal statements and CVs. A further strength is the grouping of STEM sectors into 'making things' and 'helping others' reflecting the diversity of opportunities and the attraction to a range of personalities – not just the 'nerd.'

'STEM careers' is an excellent resource for those advising on career opportunities and for anyone considering a career in science, engineering or maths. The introduction for each chapter explains what it will cover and each sub-section has clear heading so those dipping into it can quickly find the information they need. With STEM at the forefront of solving global and local issues, this book will help to ensure that we do not lose the creative potential of those who could make society a better place but may currently think that a career in STEM is not for them.