

Progress report for 'Careers in Everyday Industries' research project July 2022

The first six months of 2022 have seen the research fieldwork phases of this project in full swing. A high-level reference committee has been formed, including, but not confined to, representatives from the major employer associations and unions in the two industries. This committee has provided constructive advice to the research team on research methods, on gaining access to employers for research, and on providing examples of good practice.

A production team visited Federation University in March to record a short video on the project, which will be available on the National Careers Institute web site.

First fieldwork phase

Stakeholder interviews have been completed, and the research team has completed five company case studies in large, well-known companies in retail, accommodation, hospitality, and quick-service restaurants (fast food). The case studies, involving multiple interviews with Head Office staff and at two worksites for each company, have yielded valuable insights into the variety of careers that are available for people of all ages entering retail and hospitality, and the rapid promotion prospects. We have also gathered information on the effects of COVID on the industries.

Focus groups with scholars researching and teaching in the two industries has helped surface many of the reasons why long-term careers in these industries are sometimes not regarded as being as desirable as other industries. The impact of these public perceptions has, for a long time, significantly impacted the ability of employers in retail and hospitality to recruit high quality staff, and is of paramount importance in the tight labour market post-COVID.

Meanwhile a survey of careers practitioners in schools and other organisations has been developed. It is currently in the field in New South Wales and Victoria, and will be extended to other States in August. The purpose of the survey is to establish the level of knowledge amongst careers practitioners about career pathways in retail and hospitality, their views and attitudes towards recommending the industries as long-term career prospects for their clients, and their suggestions about what the industries can do to attract more applicants.

Second fieldwork phase

In July/August a survey for the general public, based on the career practitioner survey, will be finalised and administered.

Due to post-COVID restrictions on research in schools, we will not be able to research with senior secondary schools. We will be accessing recent school-leavers instead, as the best available proxy group. We will also be talking to tertiary students in business disciplines.

In September, two members of the research team will be in Europe, and will use the opportunity to discuss the results of the project with international colleagues and stakeholders to gain perspectives from Germany and Switzerland - countries where careers in the retail and hospitality industries are viewed in a different light.

The project continues to garner the support and enthusiasm of stakeholders in the retail and hospitality industries who are concerned with raising the profile of the industries with those seeking high quality careers.

For further details of the project, see the project web site at <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers> or contact the project leader, Professor Erica Smith, at e.smith@federation.edu.au