##### Researcher

Alright, there we go. So, I just want to start - are you happy to kind of start now? Was there anything you wanted to ask beforehand?

##### Participant 3

No, I'm absolutely, I'm absolutely relaxed.

##### Researcher

OK, great. Thank you. So just as kind of an introductory question, could you tell me a bit about yourself in terms of your career and your background, please?

##### Participant 3

Yeah, I'm a [position] at [institution] in [discipline]. So I have a PhD in [discipline] from a [foreign] university, and no-name university, [name of institution]. And I am [nationality]. And I did a master's in [home country] in [discipline]. And before that I did my undergraduate also in [home country], in [discipline]. So that was [discipline]. So my, as a researcher, my profile is somewhere between [discipline]. At the moment I'm researching [project specifics]. So that is exactly at this juncture point, if you want to call it, between the overlap between [discipline] and [discipline]. So, yeah, and I've been working at [current institution] for [number] and a half, for [number] years since [date], in an externally funded project, funded by a [foreign] research institute and my supervisor is a professor at [current institution] who's also [nationality], and we are a three people team, the other person is [nationality] and the funding ends this year in [month]. So I'm on a fixed term, full time research contract for [number] and a half years.

##### Researcher

OK. Excellent. So you are 100 percent research, no teaching at all or anything like that?

##### Participant 3

No, no teaching, no managerial roles. I've stepped in for colleagues here and there doing lectures or tutorials. But that's like once a year.

##### Researcher

So is that like where you want to be then in terms of like your pathway? Are you more interested in sort of the research side?

##### Participant 3

Yes. Yeah. But I mean, I'm, I'm comfortable teaching, I like teaching, but I think that's maybe relevant for your research. I mean, as you say in the information sheet, it's obviously publish or perish. I mean, that's what I learned. So that's, I mean, to, to focus on this. So I can always do teaching and I'm always ready to do a teaching job somewhere. And actually, I have done a teaching job at a university in [other country] because after I finished my master's, I went to [other country] as an intern at an [organisation]. And from that intern job, I went into a lecturer position at a university. Of course [other country], was trying to upgrade their, and they are still upgrading their higher education system. So they're bringing in people from abroad who have a master's degree who help to increase their teaching force and also the quality of teaching because they sent many people abroad, especially to [other countries], to do PhDs. So they are upgrading their high education system. It's quite interesting. So I was a lecturer there for [subject]. So I, I have some teaching experience. I also did some teaching during my master's in [home country]. As a teaching and research assistant for a professor who came in from [another country] to that university. So yeah, I'm comfortable doing teaching, but I try to stay away from it to protect my research time, basically.

##### Researcher

That's interesting. So coming from a, like quite a heavy [discipline] background, did you ever envisage you would end up in a business school?

##### Participant 3

No.

##### Researcher

So that was, it kind of like just kind of happened?

##### Participant 3

When I, when I, when I did my viva, when I defended my thesis - as we say in [language], I think you call it a viva in English - in [PhD-awarding institution], one of my external examiners was the professor from [current institution] who is now my boss. So he was on my viva, what do you call it, the Board of Examiners, or my viva...?

##### Researcher

Panel? I think?

##### Participant 3

My, my viva panel, yeah, exactly. I had invited him because I used his writings in my PhD. Well, theory, I mean, a lot of his theory I used to understand what's going on in my data. I did my PhD on [topic]. So I have a bit of a [discipline] background. I'm a member of [union], I'm a member of a [home country union], I'm also a member of the [home country political party]. Yeah. That probably doesn't quite fit together. But anyway, so I invited him to my panel and when I walked out of that presentation, or viva, he offered me a job. And I was unemployed at the time and I never had planned to go to the UK. That was in [year]. That was after [event].

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 3

So I wasn't particularly planning on getting myself into that kind of mess, even though, after all, I never had any issues. Yeah, particularly, I mean, the, the visa application for my husband was difficult because he's [nationality]. Because it's a one hundred page visa application, but it was much easier eventually to get all our residency status settled for him, myself, and we also have two children who are rather small, they're [age] and [age]. It was much easier than it had ever been in any other place. We had obviously gone through the same process in [other country], in [home country], and I also had tried to get a work visa in [other country], because when I was working there, I was trying to relegalise that status, but never actually got a job permit there. So, so actually, so, no, [event] wasn't really an issue there. But, yeah, sorry, that's probably off topic.

##### Researcher

No, no. It's interesting.

##### Participant 3

Maybe relevant that people might consider going to business schools, but not necessarily to British business schools. Especially if, I don't know, maybe you have more data on that than I have, but at [current institution], about half of the academic staff are non UK nationals. So obviously loads of people who come, for example, from [home country] - in [home country], you don't have this middle layer of lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, but you are basically in a precarious research associate position going from one project, externally funded project, to the next until you get into a professorship. So basically, people try and avoid these precarious ten years where you can, where the system can chew you through and chuck you out any time, by taking a detour through other countries. Where then obviously - I mean, this is obviously interesting for me - where then obviously we are ready to work at almost any income level as long as we have the job. We would do anything not to lose our, I mean, at least those who are not European, they do everything not to lose their visa status. And in my case, I mean, I was just very happy I was offered a job. And it wasn't really a question of whether I wanted to go to the UK or work at a business school. But more like, I liked my supervisor, I found the project interesting, and it coincided with my research experience in [city] because I had done research in [city] before, and new topics and all of that. And the pay is good. Job security for [number] and a half years, it seemed pretty good, irresistible, but no, I never thought I'd end up at a business school.

##### Researcher

Yeah, yeah. I think it's, it's quite common, like you were saying in [current institution], about 50 percent are non UK nationals. I'd say at [researcher’s institution], it's similar. So it's a very varied environment I find.

##### Participant 3

And PhD students? Other PhD students also?

##### Researcher

Oh, PhD students. Out of like [number], I think that's probably right, how many, there is very few UK students. So very, very few UK students doing PhDs.

##### Participant 3

And how about the people who run the whole place? How about IT, administration, facilities, cafeteria, coffee shop?

##### Researcher

See, that's pretty much, I'd say, [number] percent UK workers in those positions.

##### Participant 3

Because in [current institution] what you realise is people, I mean, I don't have data on that, but in [current institution], for example, I have some [local] friends because obviously my kids used to go to school there. And I mean, now they're all here, but I can, I can say a bit about that. I've already moved my family back to [home country] and at the moment I'm also in [home country]. I'm working from home in [home country]. But that was related to the housing situation in [location of current institution]. So essentially in [location of current institution], if you're a single earner family - because my husband didn't speak well enough English to, to get a decent job in [location of current institution] - a single earner family with kids, it's almost impossible to get decent housing in [location of current institution] because those houses that are properly insulated and that don't have mould problems are pretty much reserved for professionals without kids, or for students. So, I mean, that was a pre-pandemic situation. Let's see, I mean, 90 percent of the students or more, at [business school], are [international]. So maybe the housing market would be more relaxed now? I don't know. But I mean, the situation was pretty severe for us. We were all very ill because of the mould in our house. So in December I moved my whole family over to [home country], because at some point we just said, "OK, we can't, we can't afford to move out into the suburbs and buy a car". You know, it's different if you're [local] and you have your infrastructure there, your family, yeah. But then I mean my, my [local] friends, they don't work at [current institution], they work in restaurants, shops, schools. I know some people, [local] people, working at [current institution], but they are IT, facilities, estates. I mean, the labour, the internal labour market is split. And I think, and I think that this may be something that's also interesting for you when you look at how knowledge is produced and disseminated. Because obviously this whole, you know, at least at [current institution], we have this [engagement] discourse going on, being [an engaging] business school. And that obviously only becomes relevant, you only need this attachment to your name, [engagement], once that [engagement] is in question. Obviously, if the community that surrounds the university doesn't supply the students, if the students come from elsewhere, you're not actually educating [local] kids. And you're not providing high end, permanent, well-paid employment for [local] people. Or very, for very few [local] people. Then at some point, obviously... if you're then also not disseminating the knowledge that would develop the community around you further - I mean, although on that I really can't comment, I don't know, maybe [current institution] is doing that... I mean, I certainly am not, but maybe, maybe some other colleagues are doing that - but then obviously you, I mean, there's this need to create this discourse of [engagement], of course that's the absence of [engagement] in your real business school business model, right? So, yeah, I mean, I'm fascinated by that. I'm interested in how societies are, how social order works and what kind of social order people put up with and up until what point. And, yes. So it's quite fascinating. But I mean, I'm moving out of the [current institution] because my contract ends in [month].

##### Researcher

Right. And do you have any idea what you'll be doing at that point in terms of your next career stage or, like, where you'll be?

##### Participant 3

I've applied for two jobs, at [home country] research institutions, research institutes. At a university and at a research institute. So I'm optimistic, carefully optimistic that I'll be able to do research in [home country], close to my hometown. I live in [hometown] here. Maybe you've heard of [football team] if you're into football.

##### Researcher

No, I'm not into football, unfortunately.

##### Participant 3

Me neither, haha.

##### Researcher

I've only been to [home country] once. And that was actually last year, I went to [city].

##### Participant 3

Yeah, OK, that's around the corner. That's like half an hour, 45 minutes. Yeah. So in that area. That's where I'm situated now and that's why I'm looking for a job. But I'm also considering leaving academia for good. Yeah. So it's, I mean, it depends what offers are there. And if I can find a place where I can do the kind of research that I think is [impactful] research - obviously everybody finds that differently - then I'm going to continue in that, and if not, then I'll try and get into teaching here or just do whatever. Odd jobs, you know. So, yeah, I'm open.

##### Researcher

It's interesting, like, you note how the whole [engagement] thing. You don't ever see, for example, a medical school that says we are an [impactful] medical school, because it's like, just, it's just known that they are. So they don't need to say it. So, yeah, it's an interesting point.

##### Participant 3

They're public. I mean, they are funded by public money. It's clear that they are public. It's different for a private corporation. I get it why private corporations have to get this label of corporate social responsibility. And that's OK, yeah. We all acknowledge they are there to make profit. And they, and if they, on top of that, do some corporate social responsibility, then that's all nice. But for a public university funded by taxpayers money, to have to add [engagement] to its name, that is a declaration of bankruptcy for me. But I mean, yeah. Obviously that is not the common opinion among colleagues in the business school, but I'm, you have to know that [many of us are] unionised. We feel the pressure from employers and we understand the pressures that employers put us under. And so we don't buy into any happy family discourse anyway. They're very clear that this business school, we are in an employment contract, so we work and the benefits are for somebody else to reap. And obviously some of that trickles down to us. It's our pensions, it's our income, unemployment insurance and all of that. But we are aware that there's a surplus from what we're doing that goes to somebody else and there's a system in place to make sure that that works, and that's called employment relations. So, sorry, that's a bit off topic.

##### Researcher

No, no, everything's, everything's interesting. So I kind of want to ask, obviously you've said you're now thinking about leaving academia, I'd be interested to know why you went into academia in the first place?

##### Participant 3

Yeah, I think that that may be related to your topic, I mean, I was also, I mean, I was very interested to take part in the survey because I think you're doing very, very relevant research. Because I, it's my firm belief that there are still many, many people who go into academia because they actually want to understand and they want to understand something. And then when you've understood it, and you're actually able to put it in words, express what you've understood about society or about how to improve some value chain or whatever, whatever you've understood, you enjoy the process of putting it into writing and being able to explain it to others and then seeing that others understand, as you understand. So you enjoy this, you enjoy the process of this knowledge production and dissemination. Because essentially you enjoy the beauty of human coordination that lies in knowledge production, right. So I think that is not necessarily the reason why most people go into academia at the moment, because obviously, as you need ever higher qualifications for jobs, where you used to get in with lower qualifications ten years ago, people are almost forced into seeking ever higher levels of education. And then you might find yourself in a situation after your PhD where you just don't have many options on the job market and where you can almost get pushed into academia. Actually, actually, when I finished my PhD, I didn't really consider staying in academia because I didn't feel like they were doing a lot of knowledge work in academia, in the [foreign] university where I was working. I felt they were doing "as if", a lot. Pretending to be knowledge, to do knowledge production when actually they were just saying the same things over and over. Obviously, if you, if you want to say something new, you have to disagree with something that's been said in the past. So you have to step onto somebody's toes. And that's very difficult, especially when you have this peer review process and the three and four star papers. So I didn't feel that that actually works in favour of knowledge production, though I didn't fully understand that at the time. But I, I just felt that maybe outside academia, I had more, more options to actually be useful. Yeah. But then my current boss offered me this job. I felt I may be able to do this knowledge production and dissemination that I really want to do, and be useful. So I, and obviously I was unemployed. The pay was good. So I mean, the pay is really good. If you, if you compare what a research associate earns, I'm earning [amount] a year. If you compare that to a school teacher, to the people who teach my children how to be children, how to, how to write and read.

##### Researcher

It's much lower.

##### Participant 3

Yeah. I mean that's just ridiculous. I produce papers. It's ridiculous. I'm not saying my job is useless. And I'm not saying it's necessarily overvalued, but at some point there has to be some, I mean, that comes back to this whole [engagement] thing, right? If nurses earn a small salary, and then professors earn £50,000. At some point, I think business schools are under a lot of pressure at the moment, and I don't think they're really understanding it and really responding to it. And it might as well end them for good, as business models. Because if the Chinese market and the Indian market is gone, and it could be gone in a few years, because at least at [current institution] and I think in most other schools as well, every lecture is recorded. All the slides are uploaded. And now with coronavirus, all the readings in the library are being made available online. I mean, this is, this business is bound to move to Shenzhen or Beijing.

##### Researcher

Yeah, it's quite a vulnerable business model. And reliant on international student fees as well.

##### Participant 3

Yeah, exactly. And at the same time relying on cheap teaching also. I mean, I don't have to do any teaching and then PhD students have to teach for low pay. And they are not employees, they're not considered employees, they don't have employment contracts, the PGRs I think you call them? Do you do any teaching?

##### Researcher

Yes. Yeah. So I do, I do marking, I do teaching, and I do dissertation one to one support sessions. I get paid for it.

##### Participant 3

See, my supervisor, my boss in [current institution] is very good with that. He hardly ever used to do any of his teaching. But at the same time, he is so overstretched with the teaching, not the teaching necessarily. But with the exams, for example, because, for example, if you have, if you have to mark 200 exams in like 10 days, obviously, there's no room to sit down with your researchers, with your research team and engage with their data, with their ideas. And, you know, lead them on. So, that just doesn't, didn't, never really happened. I mean, I more felt that, yeah, that for my boss, it's, you know, observing me doing research, somehow compensated for him not being able to do any. Because of the teaching and managerial roles, because obviously if you want to progress, you also have to take over managerial responsibility. But I, yeah, ultimately it comes to, but I'm not sure if that's necessarily related to output and dissemination, but yet knowledge production, certainly. If you have supervisors who are not actually able to supervise you. Because they are busy signing, checking 200 exams. And then instead of the supervisor really engaging with your ideas and engaging with your paper, I mean, he tried to do that, but it's just, it's structurally impossible. And I mean, if he, if he had acknowledged that, I think that would have been easier. It would have made my life easier. But he didn't. But the thing is that instead of acknowledging that the system, as it is, doesn't really work, and that you have to, as supervisors for research students, for PhDs or for postdocs, postdocs or for your research team, that you have to make space for that. Instead of that, the university offers tons of research and development courses, where we are supposed to learn academic writing, how to get published, optimising my CV. All of that stuff. And all of that coursework is done by some poorly paid administrative staff or some external staff who are not even employed. So, I mean, the whole model is geared towards creating more work for bad jobs. And the actual knowledge production that is actually the raison d'etre, the reason why public universities are there, they kind of get sidelined, crowded out. And the reasons for that are certainly debatable. But I mean, that's how I feel. That's how I experience the reality of it. Personally.

##### Researcher

OK, thank you for that answer. I appreciate your honesty and everything. So I kind of want to move on and talk a bit more about your role within the business school. So are you able to summarise the sort of like formal requirements that are expected of you in your role, so like, the formal outputs that you have to achieve in your role?

##### Participant 3

Yeah, the formal requirements are all linked to the project itself. So the requirements of our funding agency, so, there are no formal requirements in terms of the business school having any demands on me to, I mean, even when it comes to internal meetings, I'm not expected to be always there or teaching or engaging with the public or anything like that. I'm there to do research. And to do the interviews, to do the readings, to put it all together, write it all up and deliver it to my supervisor, who then sees what he will do with it. I'm not there to disseminate knowledge, even though that, I mean, that's a bit of why this interview is interesting for me, because in our funding agency's requirements, dissemination is part of the requirements. And you don't get an external budget for your project unless you put something in the project plan that says something like practitioner engagement, or policy papers, or, obviously there's the output side, the academic output side. But then there's also reports to the funding agency. And then there is the third level, which is engagement with the people you've interviewed. And I feel that in our project it was fairly easy for my boss to bat off the practitioner engagement side. What I would call dissemination. So we've done academic conferences, written an academic paper, and we've, we are producing a final report for our funding agency. But when it comes to, I mean, I've tried, I've produced material to be disseminated among practitioners. I even tried to organise an appointment with the [organisation] because they invited us to present our research there. But at the business school, this is nothing but a distraction. This kind of stuff, where you actually go to policymakers, engage with them, have them critically engage with your work, criticise your findings, because obviously, if they liked your data, then I mean, I mean, it's very unlikely that policymakers would be absolutely happy with the data you produce. It's very unlikely because if everything was happy and perfect and going well, then there's no need for research. The need for research arises because people are like, "something's going wrong here, why is this going wrong?" And then once you do the research you find, look, this is how you, you know, what's the word, this is how you're getting yourself into this mess. And obviously, that conversation with policymakers is rather uncomfortable and potentially threatening your academic career. And I know people who are very successful at [current institution] and who are very successful because they consciously don't do this, they don't. They just don't. They write papers that hurt nobody. Describe a lot and explain nothing. That's how I see it, obviously, the authors of these papers would probably disagree.

##### Researcher

That's an interesting way to put it. Describe a lot and explain nothing.

##### Participant 3

Yeah, I mean, you know, I mean, I've, I've been thinking about that a lot because I was offered, offered a contract extension because there's a lot of money left in our project budget. The project budgets for these externally funded projects, they're always a bit overblown. And often there's a lot of money left at the end. And our project has actually enough money left to give me another contract for another year. And I will actually, I mean, I will speak to my supervisor next week and I will try to convince him to give this contract to somebody, because obviously I know people who are postdocs or PhDs and who are looking for another year of just being on some payroll, right. I mean, there's a lot of precarity in among academic workers. But I was considering it for a long time, and eventually I had to decline that, I had to say, "I'm sorry, I can't do this anymore". I had to say "I'm going to finish the fieldwork and I'm still doing the fieldwork, and I'm handing over the reports, I'm doing readings, I'm doing some analysis, but I'm not actually involved in the production of academic output". I think I'm involved in knowledge production. But this is knowledge production for my bosses to draw on. It's not going to leave his desk. Or if it's going to leave his desk, it's probably going to leave it in a very distorted form I expect. So, I mean, probably I'm a bit of an outlier interview. I don't, I don't expect that everybody would quite as frustrated of the people you talk to. Though, maybe some, maybe, maybe there are other people who similarly feel that, you know, dissemination is a challenge.

##### Researcher

Do you, do you wish that dissemination was more kind of formalised in what you're doing in terms of being expected to engage more in those kind of activities?

##### Participant 3

The thing is, it is, it is formalised, it is there. That doesn't change anything. It just becomes a box to tick.

##### Researcher

Oh, OK.

##### Participant 3

I mean, in the, in the project proposal, it clearly said "policy papers, meetings with practitioners, and output for practitioners". So in our case, for the [organisation], for European organisations representing [stakeholders], and for research institutes, and you always have, you always find excuses. If you're a good academic. Or if you're a good manager, probably, you always find excuses why you cannot do one thing or the other. And why instead, you're doing other things. They contribute nothing, but at least you tick the box. So you write an academic paper that extends theory, that contributes to theory, but that is essentially unintelligible for the people you've interviewed. And purposefully unintelligible, because if they could understand it, they would say, wait a moment, that's not what's going on. That's, that is my feeling from looking at the reality I encounter in my interviews. I've done interviews with close to one hundred people now in [city], mainly [city], [stakeholders] in [city]. And if I compare that to the stuff that's been written for 30 years on [topic] and how it's created and what are the obstacles to it and all of that, it doesn't fit. It doesn't fit. And when I try to come forward with different ideas, writing simply what's in my interviews, my supervisor batted that off. He said "that's irrelevant, it's not your job, that is journalism, that doesn't contribute to academic knowledge production, that is not the quality we need for four star papers, and this is not, this is irrelevant, this is this has nothing to do with us". These are two realities. There's the reality of him living in his ivory tower. And then there's the reality of me doing the interviews on the ground.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Wanting to actually get a good outcome for these people that you're talking to.

##### Participant 3

Yeah, for them, or simply, I mean, I don't think that policy papers necessarily change anything, but I do think that if you, if you are an academic and you don't tell the truth, then you are a useless academic. Then there's really no reason why you should be paid double what the people get paid to teach my kids how to read and write. There is really just no reason at all. But there is, I mean, that's probably, obviously, somebody who comes from a family with a long academic background would see that very differently. My parents aren't academics. My father is an [occupation]. My mum's an [occupation]. My husband is an [occupation]. My friends are schoolteachers. They work in restaurants. They are temp workers. They work in the NHS. They are PhD students. So obviously that's, I mean, I think it's easier to detach yourself from the reality of the people who are needing your knowledge production if your knowledge production happens in a bubble, that is a socioeconomic bubble, because obviously your income and your benefits and your working situation, it all detaches you from the reality of most working people. It is also a language detachment to some point. Obviously, if you speak one language at home and it's not the language of the community around you. At home I speak [languages], so it's easy to detach yourself from the reality of working people around you. But, but then I mean, then you're just a bad [social scientist]. That's the thing. That's, I mean, that's my basic criticism against [current institution]. And maybe they're doing a good job at, when it comes to [other disciplines]. But when it comes to [discipline], they really suck. When it comes to actually understanding the society in which they operate. Absolutely utterly useless. So obviously for me this is like...

##### Researcher

Frustrating?

##### Participant 3

Yeah, a bad place to work. So yeah, I mean, but it depends also what you want from knowledge production and dissemination, right. If you do problem solving research, if you want to find a way to optimise a product that you can produce more cheaply, then maybe, maybe business school is a good place for you. And actually businesses are interested in what you're producing there and you know, they can do it. But if you, if you're trying to understand a society in which you live then I feel that business schools, business schools are just not the right place for you. I mean, unless you want to do research on the business school. Unless you're, you know...

##### Researcher

Like me?

##### Participant 3

Haha, yeah. Unless you are fearless enough to actually look the beast in the eyes. So, you know, I'm looking forward to see whether your output will make it into a four star paper.

##### Researcher

Ah, well.

##### Participant 3

Probably depends. So anyway, when you meet the reviewer process, I mean, I, my, my experience is that there's a lot of you know, you shouldn't take everything reviewers say, as, you know, the law. They all have a vested interest, they wouldn't be reviewers in the journal if they wouldn't, if they hadn't published in that area before. And then you come up and say, wait a moment, you've missed something there. It's just, your paper is just not going to pass. It's impossible. It doesn't, I mean, the system is built up to slow dissemination down. To water it down, to make it, to just prevent it from happening. Fascinating. Fascinating. Absolutely fascinating. But obviously, I mean, my views are rather radical. Yeah, but I mean, that's why you're doing several interviews, right? How many interviews are you doing?

##### Researcher

The aim, I mean, it's that question, isn't it, of how many interviews? No one really knows. But I would say I would be comfortable having at least 40 for my PhD. But obviously my kind of justification for how many I do will be sort of theoretical saturation until, until people kind of start to sound the same. It’s so interesting. It is a very interesting topic, very interesting. Nobody that I've spoken to so far is "team business school", everyone kind of has their issues with the system and the institutions that are in place.

##### Participant 3

I work with many, many colleagues who are not there yet. I mean, who say stuff like, "oh, yeah, actually these [international] students, you know, some of them should fail, they hardly speak English, they don't understand the issues, they should fail, but we can't let them fail, they pay [amount] here, we can't let them fail". I mean, what, what does that mean for universities to say "we sell the stupid certificates". You don't actually have to do the work. You just have to pretend you're doing the work and you just have to, you know, do your best, and you get a certificate anyway. I mean, that's OK if you're in a primary school, yeah? Then that's fine. Yes. Every kid should go through primary school and do just as good as they can. But does really every kid need an MBA? Absolutely ridiculous.

##### Researcher

Yeah. So, would you, would you think it's fair to say then that there's kind of a mismatch between what you ideally would be achieving as an academic and what is expected of you in terms of what you are actually required formally to deliver and also the kind of general belief in business schools and academia that you should be focusing on four star papers and stuff, would you say there's a mismatch there?

##### Participant 3

Yes, I would, but I'm probably biased and I would suggest a reading to you, if I may.

##### Researcher

Yeah, definitely.

##### Participant 3

This is an essay by Irving Howe, but I'm going to send you the reference later on in email. A very old book from the 1960s. And it's in his book, Steady Work. And there's an essay on the age of conformity. And what he says in this essay is, I mean, it's full of very interesting, I mean, it's old stuff and probably it's, it's probably part of the forbidden section of the business school library. But what he says is essentially that the universities or research institutions or academia, they want intellectuals because they are intellectuals, but they don't want them as intellectuals. So the system absorbs the people who are able to make sense of the world around them, put that sense in writing, explain it to others and actually help others understand and engage in a conversation about, well, what are we doing here? This kind of, you know, whatever it is, whether this society in general, the economic system, wage labour relations, or just one sector of society or one value chain, whatever. If you, if you actually have the capacity to critically engage with something, then you can question it. And the system absorbs these people offers them well paid jobs, very secure - at least once you are in, once you're in the lecturer position - and highly paid, and completely detached from the rest of society. So safe. It offers a safe haven. But in that safe position, you're not allowed to be the intellectual. You're not allowed to be who you are, like you're not allowed to lift that condition, that actually enabled you to enter the system, so you, you are in the university because you are an intellectual, because you are a critical thinker, but you are not supposed to fulfil that function of a critical thinker in the university. The university wants people because they are intellectuals, not as intellectuals, because if you actually fulfil that function then you produce papers that step on people's toes. And because you question things, then. I mean, it depends probably, depends on the area. But for a business school, I mean, it's certainly difficult to produce critical research on [company] for [current institution] if [company] offers [number] student placements for the business school. It's just impossible. Just, it is impossible to do critical research on any which government policy if such government pumps a lot of money into it. I mean, they should. And that the condition that you're publicly funded, you should still engage critically with the public and also especially the government. But it just, it doesn't, the system is almost designed not to fulfil the role it is supposed to fulfil. Fascinating. I think you probably can't use it in your PhD, but because obviously you're management studies, right? So this is [discipline]. So you're more interested in, well... even though if you take an [discipline] approach, the definition of an efficient, often effective organisation is an organisation that is able to extract resources from its surrounding. Organisations are basically groups of people formalised together to, in order to extract resources from their environment. And [current institution] is immensely efficient in that. It's not a business school, it's business school business. And it does its job very well. It functions perfectly fine. I mean, unless, of course, until coronavirus hit, it's not sustainable in the long run, it was never sustainable. But obviously, there is a lot of wealth. It's extracted from its surroundings, whether it be cheap teaching by PhD students, or external project funding for research that is then not disseminated, or whether it's the [international] students who pay £25,000 a year. It's very efficient in simply extracting the resources. And obviously the resources are then distributed among the members of this organisation. So from an [discipline] point of view, do I feel that the business school is not doing what it's supposed to do? No, it's doing exactly what it's supposed to do, what it's designed to do. Only, I didn't know that it was designed to do that. I thought I was going to work in the university, and the university department called the business school. But it's just. That's not the experience I then have. I mean, all this talk about the Chinese market, the Indian market, what? I thought we were teaching people, students. The market? We are serving a market, and that's OK if you produce sausages, but not if you produce knowledge. This is absolutely insane. But maybe, I mean, I don't know, maybe it's the same in [home country]. Maybe I just don't know. It certainly wasn't as bad in [other country], it wasn't like that in [other country]. It wasn't like that at the [home country] university where I was working before during my master's. That wasn't the approach of the [research institute] with which I collaborated from [home country]. And it doesn't even seem to be the approach of the University in [other country], where I went for three months as a student, a student exchange. So I don't, maybe, maybe it is normal. But if this is normal, then I mean, this is quite scandalous. Then the problem is more systemic. Because, and I think it's coming back and biting business schools. I think they're also getting ready for failure. They are increasingly concentrating resources with central management. For cost cutting. And they are cutting off workers that are not needed. Temp workers, cheap teachers. And I mean, right now at [current institution], there's a complete stop on recruitment and there's a voluntary severance scheme again. So I think you can, I think university management at a very high level is understanding that this is not sustainable and they have very little interest in reforming the model, apparently. I think this reforming would have to come from the state. I don't think business schools would do it apart from some [impact] window dressing. What I see happening is a scramble for the, you know, if the beast is falling apart, everybody scrambles for their piece of meat. But maybe that's rather apocalyptic, hahaha. Yeah, I don't know if that's interesting from an [discipline] point of view, yeah. Because obviously you look at, you look at all of this from a management perspective, right?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 3

Yeah. I think with institutionalism you can, you can definitely understand something there. I mean, what I always find difficult with [discipline] in general is that there is this overestimation of structures. Everything is structure, and there's no agency at all. Everything is just in the logic of the organisation itself. But then no organisation comes about if there's no agency. Somebody, I mean, that's, and that's why I tried to combine the [discipline] and [discipline], because nobody takes part in an organisation if they don't feel they would gain from it. And probably good business schools, I mean, that's the same. If you want to understand why they are not producing the output that people who are working inside these organisations think they should produce, then you always have to ask who benefits from that, right? I mean, were they actually designed to create that kind of output? I mean, as a business school, you could, I mean, you can say the legitimate purpose of a business school is to educate managers. That's what they're doing. [Current institution] is educating [foreign] managers. Yeah? And that's fine. I mean, it's, obviously I mean, at some point, the question is whether or not that is sustainable, but, but you can, you can make an argument that knowledge production and dissemination is not really, I mean, that that business school doesn't have to have any relation with the real world around it. I mean, you can make a legitimate argument that that's just not what they are there for. That, I mean, in [current institution], in our library, which they were going to close before Covid-19 hit us. But it's now closing even earlier. In the library you can have tonnes of books on China or the Chinese economy that do not mention autocracy and do not mention that people there are under constant surveillance by their government. You can, you can completely blank it out that this is not a democracy. You only realise that China is not a democracy when you start going on strike and your Chinese colleagues have to be very careful not to be on any pictures of the picket line because if the Chinese government finds out that they are a member of the union here and that they are participating in a strike, they won't get a job over there. So, I mean, just to completely ignore this, as something completely irrelevant, that, I mean, that is so detached from any reality that is so... yeah, I don't know, I always find it really creepy, the few lectures I gave at [current institution], I found extremely creepy experiences. I don't know. Do you have many [international] students in [researcher’s institution]?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 3

Yeah, [current institution] is the same. So I don't need to tell you anything about standing in front of a crowd of 200 students for two hours. And nobody's whispering, nobody's talking, nobody's checking their phones or checking their emails. They are, I mean, they are the most conforming people I've ever met. If I remember when I was an undergraduate, I got told off in front of 200 people for talking in the back line. And they, I mean, they, they don't walk up to you after, after class and have questions. They don't raise their hands and have questions. I teach them about [topic] in Europe and they don't have any questions, they don't object. They don't speak up. Scary, scary, I find it scary, but, yeah, probably I don't have to tell you anything about that. So, yeah, probably it's not related to the dissemination.

##### Researcher

But again, everything is, is very interesting. So, I'm just conscious that we've gone past 3 o'clock, now, I don't want to take up too much of your time.

##### Participant 3

No it's fine, I mean, I do have another ten minutes. That's fine. Well, if you still have questions. I mean, I've already been talking quite a lot.

##### Researcher

Haha, well we've actually covered a lot of stuff. So I just want to ask like maybe just one kind of summary question. So obviously I kind of mentioned that mismatch between your kind of own values and what is expected of you, would you say you have any specific strategy or way of dealing with that?

##### Participant 3

I mean, in [discipline], you always have, I think, well not only there, I mean, generally, I think you always in life, you have three options. You voice your concerns, you shut up and be loyal - so loyalty - or you exit. So I participated in the [union] strikes thinking that they were about precarity and workload and the increasing separation of our internal labour market into cheaply paid teaching and research and administration, and highly paid professors. And in the strikes, I realised that, no, those strikes were mainly about pensions. And then when pension issues were kind of starting to be resolved then that was it. And now, during the pandemic, I realised that my values are not shared among colleagues in the business school. The business school, for example, the university stopped charging fees for the university nursery. So that means that colleagues with children save up to a thousand pounds a month. No word about what's happening to the staff in the nursery. That took another three or four weeks before the staff were mentioned, before the university's sent out an email saying "we can tell you that the nursery staff continue to be on payment, on the payrolls". Also, they cut the fees for the university gym and for parking. No word about what's happening with the workers there. If they're keeping them on payroll or not. I know that PGR staff, the zero hour teachers, are just getting paid less hours now. Because you have to work, effectively, work less hours to produce the same amount of teaching if everything's just recorded and uploaded. But I don't see that professors are getting paid less based on the same reason. And I see that the union is now hassling university management about giving people compensation for their increased electricity cost at home because they're working remotely. So, I mean, amidst a pandemic where there are people who have to work in hospitals, where there are obviously communities who are devastated by this pandemic because they live in cramped housing next to busy streets. Their lungs are already affected and they continue working because they work as Amazon delivery guys or for the NHS, security guards in the hospital or whatever. And you hear of families where both parents have died of coronavirus. And then my colleagues are actually lobbying for compensation for increased electricity pay because they can sit and work at home. I mean, this is... so yeah, I do feel there's a mismatch between my values and the values of the institution for which I'm working. Yes. And the business school is, I mean, there does seem to be an increased interest in Covid-19 related research. But I'm not doing directly Covid-19 related research, probably. So I haven't signed up for that. But I've, yeah, I'm watching other [impact] initiatives that continue, for example, to work with the local charity for [disadvantaged group] in [city of current institution], called [charity]. And the university is constantly bombarding us with messages about their, about our valuable contribution to that charity. And when I actually clicked on the link for this, where you can donate, and I regularly do that, like after 3 days, three people had donated some money. After 10 days, 5 people. After 20 days, 15 people. So it was up to a spectacular £300. You know, I don't know how many people work for the business school maybe, I don't know, at least, more than [number] people certainly. Certainly you can look the number up, I don't know. So, yeah, I feel that [impact] is obviously, for everyone to see, a public relations exercise. It's so blatantly obvious that it really only takes one witty Guardian journalist to send the whole business school business, boom! Up in the air. And it really, it really doesn't take much at this point for the whole system to implode. And, yeah, I mean, but maybe that's, obviously there for me is also some personal frustration, because I, I tried to disseminate my work and I didn't feel I could do it in this business school. So obviously then you, you build up a strained relationship, right? I had a visiting professor from [country] who said he felt there was room for critical research at [current institution]. And I also know colleagues at [current institution] who have published useful research but hardly ever in four star journals. And so I'm, I'm not sure maybe, I mean, I'm obviously, it's always easy to be apocalyptic when you're leaving a ship, right? It's easier then. Then also you don't have to do the hard work of fixing it, right? So I'm, I, I feel probably there is very little, among my colleagues, there is very little consideration for the, for the mess in which they have managed themselves into. Yeah. Sorry, that's not a very, it's not a very happy note to end the interview on. I mean, probably none of your interviews is a business school fan club Interview. So it's kind, yeah, it's kind of just, it's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it.

##### Researcher

Oh, OK. Well, I think that was probably everything I wanted to ask. So, yeah, I'll turn off the recording unless there was anything else you wanted to add, any other thoughts?

##### Participant 3

No, I've pretty much got everything off my chest. So, thanks for the therapy session.