##### Researcher

OK, great. OK, so obviously I've had a look at your profile and stuff, so obviously I know the general area you are kind of working in, but in your own words, can you kind of tell me about yourself and your background and your current role at the university?

##### Participant 6

As in my academic self?

##### Researcher

Yeah, yeah.

##### Participant 6

So I completed a PhD in [subject] in university in the south of [home country], and I think I competed officially in [year]. Then I did a postdoc in [university] in the [department] where I was, it was a continuation of my PhD. And I was looking now at [subject], specifically in the [industry], again, concentrating on [home country], and being in [university] I got to know some of the people in the business school who are quite well-known in [subject], so I used to go to the seminars and things. And so when I, when the position came up, they said I should apply and I got in. So that was in [year], I officially joined the business school. So I've been here pretty much exactly three years. In fact. Three. Yeah, almost three years. Yeah. Is that enough detail?

##### Researcher

Well, yeah, that is all really great. Thank you. In your current role, how much, how much time do you dedicate to different streams of your job, so research and teaching and maybe admin as well?

##### Participant 6

OK, so officially I think they divide the year into six hundred hours of teaching, six hundred hours of research and four hundred hours of what we call citizenship, which is kind of, it's not exactly everything else because, you know, teaching and research involves admin. So it's more like the kinds of things that we do, sitting on committee meetings, I'm heading the [research unit] for example. So, so that would be included in citizenship. In practice I think it's very, very difficult to actually make that, to actually say in practice what I do, because certainly in the first couple of years of teaching and certainly through teaching things, you've never taught before, and then in my case not only had I never taught the modules, I never actually learned them as a student, because I come from a [subject] background and suddenly I was asked to teach [discipline] and things like that. So the first year I did an enormous amount of teaching preparation just to get my head around the material and understand the material. So, proportionally, much, much more than the research. But I was still continuing with the research, with the result being that I actually ended up doing a lot more than my contracted hours. But I think that's fairly normal at all levels of academia, it's not just those who begin. Second year was similar. I got additional teaching in the second year, in the first year they tried to ease me in gently, second year I got additional teaching and the third year was much better from a teaching point of view because I had already taught modules that I was now teaching. So, yeah, I can't really give you a figure like in numbers, I can't really give you a figure, but I can certainly say that there's, proportionally, a lot of teaching for the first couple of years, and it's only now beginning to settle down to, I guess, something approaching the official contract. Six hundred, six hundred and four hundred, but now we're in coronavirus, so all the research that I was due to do this summer has disappeared and I haven't been able to do it, we've been adjusting teaching and adjusting everything to life in lockdown. So its's a bit difficult to say.

##### Researcher

OK, thank you. OK, so that's really interesting. So I kind of want to know why you decided to become an academic, what sort of drew towards an academic career?

##### Participant 6

Well, obviously, there's many different factors which play into this. I got into academia quite late, I finished my PhD at the age of [age], which I think in UK terms is quite late. In [home country] terms, it's perhaps not quite so late for various reasons, but I didn't intend to do academia. I did a master's because, well, without going into too much background, I was born in [home country] and I went back, and I left [home country] when I was young and I went back to [home country] at the age [age], I don't remember exactly. And it's what they call, my status at the time, was a [status]. In other words, someone who left when they were young, comes back, gets certain benefits that the state gives, gives them a certain amount of assistance. And one of the things I was offered was the possibility to do a degree. I already had a degree from the UK, so they offered me the option of an MA, and I did it just because I enjoy studying and they were giving it to me for free. So I did it. And then I worked for many years as a [job], and that's what I was doing at the same time as doing the master's. I mean, when I say they gave me a master's for free, they gave me tuition for free, but I still had to live obviously, so I was working as a [job] most of that time and at a certain point I left the [job] I was working at because I wasn't happy and there wasn't another [job] available. And a friend of mine had just done a PhD and he said, "look, why don't you do one too? You'll get, you'll get, you'll probably get funding, why don't you do one too?" So I contacted my supervisor from my MA. A master's is a bit more of a serious proposition in [home country] than here, it's two years with a very real solid hundred thousand word project at the end, it's a proper thing. No, I'm exaggerating, not a hundred thousand, but you know, it's a proper piece of work. And indeed, I got the, I managed to get through the master's supervisor, I got a PhD supervisor, I got the funding and began. So that's kind of why it happened. I never intended to be an academic and never really thought of that route as been a suitable route for me. But having said that, many people that I knew were not surprised I'd done it. Many people said that it was the kind of route that fitted me and they were just surprised I hadn't got there earlier. I had a very good friend years ago who used to say I spoke "sociologese". I spoke sociological language even though I wasn't one. So I think it was a natural step in many ways. And I enjoyed the academic life. I enjoyed the intellectual side of discussing things and thinking about things. And during the master's, I'd always gone to conferences and stuff, like the easy to get to conferences in [home country]. So I really enjoyed that kind of thing. And even in my undergraduate degree, I did an undergraduate which was an entirely different field, I did [subject] actually in [institution], which is, in many ways, a very practical field. But there was also an element of more what you would call an academic subject. So I did like [subject], which was very academic. In my final year I did a project where I travelled around the UK interviewing [participants], but I wasn't interviewing them about their [activity], I was interviewing them about their role as [role] in modern society. So even then, I was kind of, I didn't know it, no one told me about it. I wasn't studying any sort of methodology, research methodologies or anything. But even then, I was really quite into this sort of [social science] research and thinking in a social way. So, I mean, I only realised that in retrospect, when I began looking at [subject] more systematically and I realised it was actually what I'd been doing in my undergraduate, even though it wasn't called that. So that's a bit of a long answer to your question.

##### Researcher

That's good. That's good. Really interesting stuff. So with a background that's kind of like more [subject] and that kind of thing, would it be fair to say that you could have actually potentially ended up not in a business school and in a slightly different academic role, do you think?

##### Participant 6

Well, funnily enough, I'm sure you've heard this from others because, I mean, there's no shortage of [subject specialists] in business schools. But, for sure, I wouldn't have thought about applying to a business school. It wouldn't have been the place I would really have thought of. The only reason I applied there is because the people there were very leading names in the field that I was working in. So I got to know them, and they encouraged me to apply. Otherwise I wouldn't really have thought of doing it. And I would have naturally gone to [alternative discipline] because my master's was in [alternative discipline] and I still very much like the more broader theorising of [topic], I've published work on [topic]. So I mean, the sort of more [subject] is also very much what I enjoy doing. So it's sort of, to go back to your question, the business schools, I think, I mean you probably know more about it than I do, but I think there was a process, probably in the 2000's onwards when business schools began to realise they needed a more substantial degree. They were selling a lot of rubbish, if you'll excuse me, and people were buying it, but there wasn't much behind that rubbish, it was all very positivistic and very prescriptive and, you know, "if you're a manager of organisation with 200 employees and you want to do this then you should do this", and I think that they began recruiting on purpose to give more depth and more academic weight to their degrees, they began recruiting on purpose political scientists and sociologists and psychologists. And I mean, of course, they had accountants and finance people already but on the more management side of things, I'm really talking about the management side of things. Human resource management, general management, on that side of things they were looking for people with a weightier academic background. But I think a lot of [subject specialists] took advantage of that also because, you know, you're aware of this too, [alternative discipline] departments are not doing very well. They're not very well funded. And they needed jobs really. So, again, that's kind of why I'm in a business school and what I think about it.

##### Researcher

OK, yeah, that's a good answer. Thank you. OK, so I'm going to move on and talk more about the kind of specifics of your job. So you already kind of talked about how your time is split up and your sort of workload. So are you able to tell me the kind of formal requirements of your role? And by that I mean things that you are required to deliver or achieve in, for example, a given academic year. So for example that would be something like, I don't know, a certain number of publications in a given year or a certain student evaluation score in a module in a year. And if possible, could you tell me where these sort of requirements come from? So they might be like business school level or university-wide level. Sorry, that's a big question.

##### Participant 6

No, that's fine. There's a number of things. I mean, there's a contractual aspect. But to be honest, I haven't looked at my contract since I signed it three years ago, and I have no idea what's written there except that I do remember I'm supposed to work 37 hours a week, which is I mean, obviously rubbish. No one works 37 hours a week. No one work less than 50 hours. Well, I don't know, I mean, 37 is unlikely. We all do more than that. I mean, you know, there are weeks when I manage to do less, but mostly I'm doing much more, but never mind. But apart from that, on a very broad level, you're expected, and this isn't from year to year, but on a broad level, you're expected to maintain a good output of publications, a good teaching score which is mostly through the student union scores, and you're expected to take on a certain amount of what they call "citizenship roles", which I explained earlier. That's on a very broad level. That doesn't mean that anyone is going to complain if you get a bad score for one module for a year, or maybe you have a year when you don't get any publications at all, that's fine. If, overall, you know, you maintain a good level. Now in terms of publications, you're aware of the REF, I'm sure, the Research Excellence Framework. So a lot has come to be based around that these days. If you have your REF-able publications for that particular REF round, then you're kind of OK. I would say that's a minimum. And if you were looking for a job elsewhere and you only had the minimum REF publications, they would wonder why you weren't doing more. But from the institution's point of view, if you've got them, you're probably OK. But if you're looking for promotion and all the rest of it, then you probably should do more than that. In terms of teaching, most schools, I believe I have a certain teaching level, I mean, like a level of satisfaction, according to the student union scores, that is supposed to be around the average, a bit more a bit less, it doesn't really matter. You get different cohorts of students, you get some years that are worse than others. You might try something innovative in teaching and it doesn't quite work as you planned. It's OK that scores go down, but if it goes down and it stays down for a couple of years, people are going to raise eyebrows. So that's kind of overall. On a year to year level I have what they call a PDR, Personal Development Review, with my line manager. My line manager is the head of the section. Ours is a big business school. We divide it into sections. So we have a section on finance and accounting, we have a section on marketing, we have a section on operations and logistics, and my section, which is [subject]. And it's a big section. Head of the section is my line manager, occasionally the head of section changes so my line manager changes, and we meet once a year to discuss what was happening the year previously, how I was doing and what kind of things I can expect to aim for going on in the coming year. So fairly standard annual review kind of procedure. You see this, most big businesses have something similar. Again, depends very much on the line manager exactly how these things are done. I've never had any problem with it. It's always been very friendly. I know the people, I know my line manager very well, he's a colleague, he's in the section, you know, we discuss things. It feels very much a friendly chat with someone I work with as opposed to a pressured and stressful chat with someone who is somehow higher than me in the hierarchy. He is higher than me in the hierarchy, but, you know, you don't really notice that too much. He's also supervising a PhD student, and I'm the second supervisor for that PhD student. So, you know, very much a colleague on many levels. We work together. So during that year, it's not necessarily quantitative. So, if he knows that I have a couple of articles being written, then he might say, "how about we try and get them published by the end of the year?" If he knows that I don't have anything, or I've just had a couple of publications out then he might say "let's try and get a couple of articles written, but not necessarily published by the end of the year". So it's very, it's very flexible and it very much depends on an overall trajectory as opposed to what's actually happening that particular year on the publications level. In terms of teaching, again, we don't discuss teaching that much. It's mostly to do with more publications and my own career as opposed to the teaching. Teaching is something I'm just supposed to get on with, and if the student scores are good, then, you know, students scores are good and I'm giving a module that more or less fit the module description. Then no one comes to me with complaints.

##### Researcher

OK. Excellent. OK, thank you. So you talked about the goals that you make from these, was it a PDR?

##### Participant 6

Yeah. Yeah.

##### Researcher

Yeah. In that, is there any reference to creating impact beyond academia or is it all very much sort of focused on publishing and that kind of thing? Because I know in the REF, obviously there's a huge part of the REF that is looking at impact and impact case studies, I wonder if that ever sort of comes into it at all or if that is maybe like a bit of an afterthought?

##### Participant 6

Well, bear in mind that I'm a relatively junior academic, so I've only been three years in a lecturing role, a standard full time entry role. So that's never really come up as an aim. However, I have had a bit of impact this year, for various reasons, I published in a few places with some proposals outside academia. I've had the government get interested and I've talked about this with my line manager and he's been very, you know, very enthusiastic saying, "good, this is a very important part of what we're doing". So I'd say that up till now I haven't had pressure to do this, but I am aware that it's kind of looked on very well if you manage to do this kind of thing. The REF does have these impact case studies. But in terms of numbers, it's far fewer. You know, not everyone is expected to submit, and if you submit, it's wonderful, but they really don't expect you to do it. Certainly not of a junior academic, because the REF, the kind of impact the REF is talking about is usually something that you gain over a lot of time, certainly in the social sciences. You know, it's gaining a reputation and expertise that people start coming to you and then applying your ideas or applying your insights. And that doesn't generally happen when you're only three years into the job. For some lucky people it happens. So, for example, the kind of impact I've had, I think it's very nice and it makes me feel good, but I don't think it's really the level the REF are talking about. The REF want more than that.

##### Researcher

OK. Yeah, great. OK, thank you. And I, I think, you kind of briefly mentioned before we started about [university strategy], does that come into things a lot? Is that mentioned a lot? Do you feel like it is a central part of what everyone is doing or is it may be more of a...

##### Participant 6

Window dressing?

##### Researcher

Maybe, yeah, is it, is it that?

##### Participant 6

You know, all this is anonymised, so we can say what we want.

##### Researcher

Oh, of course, yeah, yeah, yeah.

##### Participant 6

Hahaha. No, well, funnily enough, they began the [strategy] just before I applied to the position and the previous head of the school - so when I applied it was a different head of school and he was really pushing for this [strategy]. And I think people were quite sceptical at the beginning. They felt it was a bit of his own sort of personal project, a bit of window dressing. But I'm actually, I myself am quite impressed, actually. I think it's more than window dressing. And I think other people are beginning to think that maybe it's more than window dressing. And so I mentioned it in my presentation in my interview when I was talking about why I wanted to be in [university]. And I was actually quite sincere about that. I wasn't just saying it. I was, I was mixed. I had mixed feelings about applying for a business school in the first place. So, so I was quite happy that I had a business school that seemed to be thinking outside the regular roles of business. And then, I didn't mention it, but you've probably seen that one of my relatively new research interests is [topic]. So for me, it was very important to have that backing and I knew I was going to be doing that research even before I began at [university]. So, I mean, that was an opportunity to research a particular organisation, just as I was applying for [university]. So I said during my interview "look, you know, [subject] is my background, but this is a new research direction that I'm intending to follow in the next couple of years", which fits very much the engagement perspective they have. And they were very, very happy to hear that. And I think that was probably an important credit. I think, what's the word I'm looking for, you know, it gave me points in the interview, positive points. And then there was a short time when the business school was trying to get used to what that meant. And then we had a change of head of school but the current head of school very much continued that path, rightfully so, in my opinion. And we got an external engagement position in the business school, like a temporary position, I forgot what they call it. But, you know when, there's a word for it, sorry, it's slipped my mind, but when a scholar comes in for two or three years for a special...

##### Researcher

Fixed term?

##### Participant 6

Well, more than fixed term. Someone who is supposed to come in for a specific reason and a particular... anyway, so we've had a couple of them and they've come in and they've been hosted by the school and there's been money put aside for projects which are tagged as impact projects. And in all section meetings, we now have an impact section, standing section at the meeting - I don't know if you've been part of a meeting - but, I mean, that's a whole new culture of, that's completely new to me, but you know, you have these standing items at the end of each meeting and one of those standing items is impact now. So they're making, they're making efforts to really anchor this value in practical terms within what the school is doing. And again, it's early days, it's only been like three years now. And that's, you know, in academic terms, three years is like a minute and a half. So, but, so these things take time. But I think they're doing it. And I think it's a good thing. It's certainly part of the school, yeah.

##### Researcher

Great. OK, thank you. And just on the topic of impact, is that, going back to kind of why you became an academic in the first place, was that something you kind of envisioned as something that you wanted to achieve as part of your career? Sort of like, an impact focused academic?

##### Participant 6

Well, funnily enough, in research, you know, I suppose like many people I came into academia because I liked the research and I wasn't that interested in the teaching and I didn't really know anything about teaching. I never really thought of myself as a teacher. But having come into academia, and you know yourself, or maybe you don't but I'm assuming you know that, you know, teaching in academia today is very different from 15, 20 years ago. Like, I would be quite happy to lecture the way I had been lectured to, but that's not the way things are done anymore, at least not in the business school, and rightly so. I think today with the, the ease of getting hold of books and the ease of getting hold of material, we don't need a lecture anymore. Lectures were given because students needed to know certain things. But nowadays, you can know those things without having a lecture, and the lecturer, the teacher, is freed up to do much more valuable pedagogic work. And I think all that is right, but what I'm trying to say, is that although I was happy to lecture, I never thought of myself as a teacher. On the other hand, one of the things that did attract me to academia was a possibility of influencing students. So even though it was really, I was really attracted to academia because of the research, I also like this idea that I would have a platform from which I could make a difference in the way students think. So impact in terms of research, I never really thought of that. As far as I was concerned, research was mostly for my own interest. If other academics are interested, that was fine. I'm talking about the past, today I think it's a little different. But that was how I was thinking in those days. Teaching as a platform. Now I see, because of the recent work I've done with [topic] and the opportunity to make some kind of impact, I see that as being quite attractive and nice. A nice thing to be able to do. Again, I'm talking very moderate. I'm not talking about big impact here, I'm talking more about raising ideas and getting people to think about certain ideas, which, as far as I'm concerned, is already a good step forward. And I'm beginning to accept that much of my role in being a teacher, which requires a lot of learning from me - I mean, I have to learn how to teach, I have to learn the techniques, I have to learn the technologies available to help me do this - I have to accept that students have a different place in the hierarchy than they did when I was doing an undergraduate degree. I was one of the last cohorts to go through without paying, believe it or not. Nowadays, of course, all students pay and they are treated like customers and they've gotten used to being customers. So, it has a very different... I'm not saying that is all bad, I think it's quite a lot of bad, but not all bad, when it's shaken up teaching in a good way, but all of that is to say that I do see this opportunity to guide or help students towards a different understanding of things that they might pursue. And in all my modules, I do a module, for example, that has [institute] approval, you know the [institute]?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 6

So they're quite descriptive about what has to be in a module, which is called, whatever it's called, if it has [institute]... approval isn't the right word, but you know what I mean.

##### Researcher

Accreditation?

##### Participant 6

Accreditation, thank you, that's the word I was looking for. But even within a module like that, there's still plenty of cracks in the module where I can put a lot of subversive critical material, and I had a lot of very happy students saying, you know, that the module opened their eyes to things they never really thought about and opened their eyes to the tensions and contradictions in the role that they thought they were learning, because it's kind of a practical course in some sense. And so that is an impact, and that's, and I've only really begun to realise recently how important that impact is to me, and I've never thought of it really in those terms before. So it's something that I grew into as part of the role.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah. Impact through education. Yeah, no, definitely a very important aspect. And, we kind of covered this already, you were talking about how you can find bits in modules where you can really kind of make it your own. But I just want to ask generally, do you feel quite enabled, or I guess empowered, to kind of make that impact, or do you feel that there might be some constraints, or what? How does it work?

##### Participant 6

It depends very much on the programme and on the module. So, for example, the one I just mentioned with the accreditation, as I said, it's quite limited in terms of the subjects I'm supposed to cover, quite prescribed, but I still find these cracks. And, you know, I can, I can teach a particular theory or a couple of concepts and then I'm completely free to turn them on their head and say why these might be problematical. I don't know how familiar you are with the kind of material I'm teaching, but, for example, we have [topic]. So I teach the basics of sort of the standard [topic] as part of the accredited course, sort of mentioning the big names, explaining how a lot of the training provided by commercial companies to managers is based on these big names, and then at the same time giving a very critical account of why this research may be deeply problematic, looking at it from a post-colonial point of view, looking at it from a sort of methodological problematic point of view. You know, a very critical way. Now, that's the accredited module. There's another module I do which is actually, the whole module is [topic], which I do with the undergraduates. Now, it's not my module, I mean, it's a different module leader, I do the first semester, she does the second semester. So it's kind of her module that's been developed, but she thinks in a very similar way to me, so we've done that very well. And here again, we have to cover certain basic theories, if you like, the state of the art of [topic]. But, so, we do that, and we do it quite rapidly in order to leave us time for the things I mentioned before. So looking at the methodological problems of some of these big research projects, looking at the Eurocentrism, taking a post-colonial approach, and questioning what we mean by [topic], questioning points of views of how we define [topic]. So there's plenty of space for doing it. So, again, I would say in the [topic] module, it's less prescriptive than the accredited one. The [institute] have a specific module in mind. Here, they're more free. But the business school expects us to cover certain theories which are sort of state of the art theories, but we find plenty of space to put our own stuff in and make very critical. The third module I'm doing is [topic] and I'm the module leader for that. And I have someone else doing the first semester, and I do the second semester. So the first semester is very much standard [topic]. And then, so she does that in the first semester, and then in the second semester, I'm looking at [topic] from an [discipline] perspective. As soon as we look at the [topic] on those terms then we open it up to things like ethical concerns, concerns about responsibility of the organisation, power issues. So I put them all in there, in the context of [topic]. So, I'm moving a long way from what you might call classic [topic], into a very uncertain and complex picture, and a very critical picture of all that world. And I've actually had some very good feedback on that. Also from students, as I said, that some students have been very happy to be exposed to that, I mean, they're third year students, they haven't heard much of that for the whole of their degree and then in their final semester of their undergraduate degree, suddenly they get all this. And I think it gives them a very different picture of the kinds of things that they've studied throughout their degree. But I've also had some very good feedback from other academics, the external examiner last year was very complimentary, saying he hasn't seen anything like this and it's fantastic this is being done. You know the external examiner, you know that system, yeah?

##### Researcher

Mm hmm.

##### Participant 6

And then I was invited, I know someone in [home country], also in [discipline], a professor at [foreign university], who, I met him at a conference just by chance, I mean I knew him before then, but, you know, we met at the conference and went out for coffee to catch up, you know, talking about this course. And he was so excited about it that he invited me to teach next summer, this particular module as a standalone module without the first semester. So it's clear that I've managed to get some kind of critical way of thinking within what otherwise would be a very prescriptive, positivistic, an uncritical approach to the subject, to such an extent that it's getting some kind of recognition. So I'm quite happy about that, yeah. I hope I didn't talk too much.

##### Researcher

No, no, this is all great. So you've kind of left your stamp on it a bit then, on the, on the modules and stuff, put your own kind of flavour in.

##### Participant 6

Yeah, yeah, for sure, yeah.

##### Researcher

OK, great. So I want to talk, just conscious of time, we've got about 15 minutes. I don't want to, I don't want to take too much of your time. So I wanted to ask about, so obviously we talked about the formal requirements, things that might perhaps have to achieve in a given amount of time, to which there wasn't really a whole lot, but kind of like the workload and the amount of hours you have to spend on certain things. I want to ask now if there's any kind of like expectations, that aren't formal requirements, but a more, kind of like unwritten rules. So something you might be expected to do, but it's not, maybe not spoken about. So I kind of mean like, norms. So perhaps the pressure to publish in certain journals, obviously you've spoken about there being kind of like a normative pressure to teach certain things, but you kind of get around that, you put your own things in. But yeah, I mean like, kind of certain journals you might be expected to publish in, whether that be by ranking or impact factor or whatever, or anything along those lines. So if any of those exist, would you be able to tell me about those?

##### Participant 6

Yeah, I mean, you said unofficial or unspoken, I think they're very much spoken. I don't know if they are contractual. Let's put it that way. Like I said, I haven't read my contract since I signed it, and I think it's almost irrelevant. After all, you know, the last paragraph in the contract always says "and any other things we ask you to do". So, I mean, they're covering their backs with that. But, yeah, in terms of, for example, journals, there are certain journals which are considered, you know. Well, first of all, we used to use the ABS, the Association of Business Schools, ranking of journals, and of course, we want four star journals. That's what we're looking for. And in my particular field there is only a couple of them actually in that ranking. And you're probably aware of many different rankings, there's impact factor and there's a couple of different organisations that produce an impact factor, and there's the ABS ranking and there's the QS ranking. There's all sorts of different ones. Now, different institutions have different requirements. We're a business school, unsurprisingly, we go for the ABS ranking. But I also have to pay attention to, you know, if I were to move school, for example, it wouldn't help that I had lots of ABS high rankings if none of them had a nice impact factor. And say I wanted to go to the [alternative department] where they're looking for the impact factor. So I have to try and juggle that a little bit. Having said that, my strategy for publishing is mostly publish in the journal which is most relevant to what I'm writing, whether that's high or low ranking. Now, having said that, I think it was only about a year ago, [university] signed the DORA agreement. I don't remember what that stands for, but you can look it up. And it basically is an agreement, I think it's something from the states, which basically says we will no longer look at journal ranking, we will look only at the quality of the article. So what does that mean in practical terms? Well, when you're looking at the quality of an article, it's basically when you're trying to get a position, when you're trying to get a promotion or when you're trying to go for the REF. Now in the REF, I think they've been looking at all articles published in three and four star journals. So there, it still makes a difference. Having said that, if you think you have a very good article that isn't in a good journal, then they're encouraging you to flag that up to the people who are dealing with the REF. So it might still be submitted for the REF, even though it's not in a three or four star journal. But the onus is on you, I think, to flag that up. But in terms of promotion and getting a job in the first place, the school is committed not to use the journal ranking proxy for the quality of the publication, but to look at the publication itself, in theory.

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 6

So that's kind of the pressures of the unwritten expectations of publications. I think everything else, I don't think there's anything that I feel is an unwritten expectation, to be honest. I think it's all quite expected and spoken about.

##### Researcher

OK, OK, great. Thank you.

##### Participant 6

Well, I suppose the unwritten one would be, well, it's still spoken about, but I mean, people know that we work a lot of hours, people know that we have an unmanageable workload. During the strikes last year, whenever it was, we had - I don't know if you've been following the strikes, was [researcher’s institution] part of the strikes?

##### Researcher

Yes.

##### Participant 6

So, the union submitted a freedom of information to get a specific breakdown of the hiring, and they found some crazy figures, ridiculous changes in student to staff ratios and an enormous amount - in [university] I'm specifically talking about, of course, because it changes from university to university - but in [university], very, very big differences in ratios, proving that in the last 10, 15 years there has been enormous workload implications. And not only that, but a lot of the staff, I mean, the university was throwing numbers around, you know, "two hundred staff members hired in the last five years alone", and yet 90 percent of them weren't even teaching staff. They were going into admin in the central offices. So we only got that through a freedom of information demand as well. So, yes, there is very serious workload issues and they're only going to get worse now that Covid-19 has demanded we change everything and get rid of staff. And that means that we work a lot of hours. Now, this has implications also for the for the academic life. I mean, a lot of - I'm sure you know about this, I'm sure people have spoken to you about this - but a lot of what we publish, there's this idea of the "minimum publishable". You know, everything you do should be at the minimum you can just to get a publication, which means that we're producing an enormous amount of output, which has little substantive value. But it still takes a lot of work to do it. You know, every article you write takes an awful amount of work to write, even though it's the minimum amount of value. So, why am I saying this? Because we have this workload, we can do the workload, we can do it, we can do that teaching, we can get those articles out, but it means that we have much less time for just sitting in the common room with a cup of coffee and talking things over, which is where the best thinking happens, which is where the best research comes from. And having done that thinking, we have far less time to actually write that substantially good article, because, well, first of all, we don't want to write a substantially good article. What we want to do is write any old thing as long as it gets published. So, yes, there is very serious work issues. We all know we're working too much. We all know that despite what the university says, we have to work those hours in order to survive and get, you know, get the right, get the job and get the promotion and all the rest of it. And at the same time, we all know that it is negatively affecting the quality of our research and probably the quality of our teaching too. And this is the interesting thing about Covid-19, is that we suddenly are being asked to do all sorts of things which we've been saying we want to do for years, but we've never been given the resources to do it. Everyone knows that standing in front of 300 people in a lecture hall is not the right way to be teaching. But instead of saying, "OK, we'll give you groups of 20 and increase the number of lecturers by a factor of 20", they say, "oh, no, we'll give you another 200, and you can have 500 in front of you instead of 300". Because it's cheaper. So I mean, we know, and the university knows, that these decisions are not made on pedagogic quality grounds. They're made on very different business grounds. Students don't complain, that's fine. And they make the students happy in other ways, which is not reliant on paying a salary, like renovating the sports hall or bringing in an outside company to put up the, you know, the student halls, which are all new and shiny, instead of continuing with the old ones that the university used to run. You know, all of these things, which is "keep the students happy in different ways, but keep wages down by ensuring a minimum number of staff". OK, I went off on a rant there. But then, these things are important.

##### Researcher

No, it's all great, honestly, I really appreciate your honesty and everything. So, I'm just, I'm conscious I don't want to keep you too long past the hour.

##### Participant 6

That's alright, no worries. I'm OK for now.

##### Researcher

OK, excellent. So I only really have one more thing I really want to ask. So you've talked about the issues with workload and hours, obviously there's certain expectations, certain requirements, and then there's also the impact strategy and there's an expectation to be impactful. So there's lots and lots of different things going on. So I want to know personally how you navigate this environment and if you maybe have a particular strategy, or if you don't, kind of just what you think you do on a day to day basis to navigate this environment.

##### Participant 6

Yeah, it's a very good question. It's an extremely difficult thing to do. And I think that's another aspect. I'll say in parentheses that I think being an academic - and you should probably take note of this if you're planning on continuing in academia after your PhD - it's probably the job that you are least prepared for. You know, you're going into teaching, you'll get a teacher training certificate, you want to be a lorry driver, you get a driver's licence, you want to build a bridge, you get to be an engineer. But to be academic, all you do is a PhD and the rest you have to learn on the hoof. You know, it's crazy. It's really crazy. So one of the aspects which I never imagined was juggling such an enormous number of things, and it's incredibly difficult, and it's made worse by modern working methods. For example, there used to be a time when a male professor would probably have a female secretary. Now, there's a lot of things wrong with that situation, but what was right about the situation was the efficiency. Now, for example, we don't need a secretary. I can print my own printing. I can do my own photocopying, which we're encouraged not to do now, of course, you know, friendly, environmentally friendly. I can write my own emails. I can answer my own emails. All of those things I can do. I don't need a secretary. However, if I had a secretary - I wouldn't need a personal secretary - but if there was a secretary taking care of all these things for the people, then I could concentrate on what the university hired me to do, research and teach. So there is very serious workload issues with this juggling, with the enormous number of things that we are expected to do. Just for an example, I'll give you an example because it came up today actually, something I was thinking of. Every time I get a publication, we're supposed to inform the office that deals with the REF so that they can know that they have a new publication and when they need it for REF, they look at it. But in order to do that, I have to upload it to the university repository site. And I have to inform another office about it, and I have to make sure that a particular version of this article is on the repository site, and I have to worry about whether it's open access or gold access or green access and all these things. And I can waste half a day because, you know, I don't publish that often. In between, you know, those months between one publication and the next, I don't remember exactly who needs what, and half the time they change the system anyway. And I do all of that and waste an entire day and emails backwards and forwards asking people and they're wasting their time helping me, instead of me saying "oh, a publication", throw an email at an office and they deal with all of that, because they can deal with all of that. You know, they don't need me for anything except the fact that I can do it, too. I can do it, too. So they have shoved that on me. Now, there's lots of research about this, by the way, of how as things become easier to do, as technology helps us to do it, we become less and less efficient because the wrong people begin doing it. Instead of, you know, instead of the office sending us an Excel sheet with the marks, we are now expected to know how to use Excel. Now, OK, I know how to use programmes, it doesn't take me long to learn how to use Excel. But multiply the time I've spent learning Excel by the 200 staff we have in the business school. Why should we be doing it? It's not, it makes no sense at all except as a false economy - "we can get rid of the secretary, we don't need to pay the secretary anymore because the academics can do it". Now, again, this is known, this is, everyone, this is, this isn't even critical management. This is fairly standard management I'm talking about here. And yet all organisations do this and they make the same mistakes because it's a, it's a process. It's not suddenly you get all this stuff, it's "oh, we'll give them this, give them a little bit of that, a little bit of that, a little bit of that", and over a year suddenly getting more side things to do. So that's all that side of things. You can spend all morning going through emails. Why on earth would they pay me a lecturer's salary to go through emails? And yet we all do it. Again, that was a bit of a rant, but it is connected to this idea that we do have an enormous amount of different things to do, and we have to juggle all of that. There's also the process of, what's the word I'm looking for? Promoting ourselves. It's not enough that we do this research, we write the paper, we have to promote it. We have to go and talk about it and send tweets about it and put it on social media and ResearchGate et cetera, all those things, and we have to inform the university press officer so that they can put a little tweet about it. And it all takes time and it all requires different skills. And you have to learn those skills. Now, I should say as well, I don't think this is unique to academia. I think, you know, unless you're filling shelves in Tesco, pretty much every job with a certain skill level is undergoing similar processes. So it's not just academia, but you have these, a very wide range of skills, so, you know. And teaching, but even teaching, am I am preparing a lesson, am I reading up on more recent research in order to make sure what I'm teaching is up to date, am I learning new technology? And some of these technologies have bells and whistles like class polls. They don't do anything, come on, between you and me. But students love it and it raises the NSS scores or whatever they call it, the National Student Survey scores. So, I mean, again, there's a lot of stuff to be done here. And there's a question of priorities. Some things you can push off forever. I'm still not a fellow of the HEA, Higher Education Academy. And I'm supposed to be. But that's something that's never a priority. There's always something more important. So I push it off and push it off and push it off. The same with research, you know, I have to get that lesson done for tomorrow, because tomorrow I'm going to be teaching those students. I don't have to get that article off tomorrow. I can do that next week or the week after or next year. And yet you have to make this decision because I do have to get that article off sometime. So there's a lot of balancing, it's a lot of work, I make a lot of lists, I write a lot of things in my diary and cross it out and move it to the next day. I probably waste hours making these lists. And yet, yeah, I mean, this is part of, this is, this is probably a very difficult part of what we do, balancing all of that. Yeah. And I go to workshops, higher management workshops, to try and help me do it.

##### Researcher

Haha. Well, thank you for your honesty and everything. I really appreciate it. I don't actually have any other questions. I can't think of anything else. Unless there's anything else off the top of your head you think that you might want to add or anything?

##### Participant 6

It's probably good, if you're happy with the kinds of things we've covered, then that's fine.

##### Researcher

Oh, definitely, yeah, yeah, no, that's, that's really excellent. I've got a lot of good notes and stuff here, so thank you very much. I'll actually stop recording now.