##### Researcher

Okay, great. So the first thing I wanted to ask is obviously I've read a bit about you on your profile on the website, but just kind of in your own words, can you just tell me about yourself and your kind of current role and your career?

##### Participant 20

Okay. So I came back from, I did my PhD originally at [current institution] at something called the [research centre] back in the 80s. I was a [subject-specific scholar] originally who had done [subject] at [another university] actually. And then went into [non-management discipline]. So I blended an interest in [topic] with an interest in [topic]. So my PhD ended up coming about, I came up from [city] to [current city] where family were based originally, not originally, but they were there at the time. So I needed somewhere to live. And I got a [research council] research grant. So, my PhD was on [area] and it was a sort of critical [topic] study. After that I went into practice for a decade. So I was [role] and then I went down to [region] and was [role]. And then I went to [foreign country] to [carry out role]. Came back to [current city] for health reasons, actually, because I caught something a bit nasty. And ended up staying, so I went back to [research centre], I think it was in the mid 90s, which is where my sort of academic type of career reengaged. And spent a good 15 years, if not more, researching, teaching, writing about [topic], which wasn't a million miles away from my PhD. But since [the early 2010s] for various reasons - probably mainly because I felt I'd had enough of [non-management discipline], having done a PhD on it, having done lots and lots and lots of projects in [continent] on it, then another decade or 15 years of research - I've got into [current discipline], asymmetrically. And as a result of that, I'm now the sort of, lead is too strong, but heavily involved in the design, conceptualising and design and teaching of, teaching about [subject] to undergraduates and postgraduates and some PhD supervision. But bringing a sort of, what you might call a former [subject specialist] type of perspective to the topic of [current discipline]. So as you would appreciate, [current discipline] might be thought of as a [phenomena] rather than the conventional business school take on it. So that's where I am at the moment. What am I doing? I have just written a piece on [topic] that is in press. I've got a paper in review on [topic], hopefully will be published soon, accepted probably soon. And I'm probably going to write something very irreverent about the comedy of [discipline] from my decades of experience of doing it in practice and observing it in practice and researching it. Probably for something like the [non-management journal]. Yeah, that's where I am now.

##### Researcher

Okay. Wonderful. That's very interesting. So you did your PhD and then you were working in kind of [area] and then came back to academia. Is that right?

##### Participant 20

That's right. I never really left, I had a visiting lectureship for quite a long time while I was out in practice. My PhD supervisor was a guy called [name] and he became Professor at [universities]. He's only recently retired. So as you know, you stay in touch with people. I stayed in touch with people I knew from the [research centre] days, and I came back as a visiting lecturer, teaching about [topic] because of the jobs I was doing really, and because of the, because you have a PhD, you're sort of regarded with a degree of acceptance as a practitioner and academic in academic settings.

##### Researcher

So, obviously you kind of said that you moved into [discipline] because you'd spent so long sort of studying [previous discipline] and working in that kind of area. But what, what kind of pushed you into that kind of different, I guess, discipline?

##### Participant 20

Well, it was serendipity. One, the university wanted to really focus on [discipline] and set up a centre for [discipline]. So I became the acting director of that for a while, and every school and every department, so [research centre] for the [department] was asked to put somebody up who could make a contribution to the university's strategic thinking on, you know, how it should, how it should invest the [area] and why. So I was sort of put up to do that. But from the intellectual perspective, I'd say that what had become clear to me through my practice life, so my PhD was, as PhDs are, a little bit abstract. I was interested in, you know, [topics] sort of stuff that you'd expect to find in a [non-management discipline] setting. But I think what comes to you in the world of practice is that, and I took those [philosophical] understandings of [topic] and deployed those understandings with phenomenal financial success at [organisation] for a decade. But what becomes clear to you, I think, in practice is that, that systems in the institutional sense or the decision making sense, these abstract notions we play around with, are not bereft of people, and that human relations matter. So, whilst trying to stay away from the [another subject] discipline that attempts to explain [phenomena], it was clear to me that we couldn't, we'd left, the one thing that was missing from the work that we had been doing in [research centre] and subsequently after I came back to [research centre] was the [dimension]. And so it became clear to me in practice that the one thing that was missing in our sort of [view of the world] was the [dimension]. And the [current discipline] conversation is one way of getting into that through a largely conventional literature rather than just coming at it through the sort of [other literature bases].

##### Researcher

Yes, so very, seems very kind of interdisciplinary, drawing on lots of different kinds of aspects.

##### Participant 20

Yeah

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. So I want to move on and talk about your role at the moment, and kind of where you are. Obviously, you're engaging in kind of teaching and research at the same kind of time or in the same kind of timeframe. So could you tell me sort of roughly how much time you dedicate to each different activity?

##### Participant 20

Well, formally as a [role], I should only be dedicating 10% of my time to research. But these days I work part time. So I work three days a week and I dedicate my private time to research as well. So in reality I'm probably, although this is a really unusual year, okay, so let's forget this year a little bit, and say that next year typically I'd probably be 50% on teaching. And I've chosen to do that for another reason which I can explain if you want. I've taken a strategic decision to go upstream in my [subject] education work. So not to work very much with post-experience, people in practice, MBAs and others, or chief executives and local authorities or development agencies who come in and want to do a [course]. I'm less interested in that now. I'm more interested, and the reason for that is that I think it's too late to be asking people to reconceptualise, to reconceive of the way that they think about [topic], okay. So my, I decided to go upstream into undergraduate, in the undergraduate field, and to work with the younger undergraduate cohort who are less fixed in the ways in which they understand and want to understand and also practice this thing called [discipline]. So I spend about 50% of my time on that and then there's about, I don't know, between 20% to 30% of my time would be on master's and PhD supervision work, personal academic tutoring work, and the balance would be on, on research. But I suspect that when I write, when I finish the thing I'm doing at the moment, which is [project], once I've done that, I suspect I may not, although I'm under pressure, I may not want to stay, I may not want to write anymore or research anymore in the field that I am in. Because, you know, at my age I'm towards the end of the career conveyor belt. Although the new thing on my agenda as of this semester as a result of Covid-19 is possibly some work on the relationship between disability and [discipline]. And that's largely because I have a disability. That's why I came back from [foreign country] all those years ago. And what's absolutely evident through Covid-19 is that it has been a profoundly ableist experience and a disabling experience for disabled people. In a very simple sense, how are disabled people with disabilities supposed to get to these mega vaccination centres? How are disabled colleagues meant to get all their kit home at 24 hours notice in March? Why are there so few people with disability in senior leadership positions in public service and in universities? And in business and enterprise in [region]? What does the data tell us? What are the obstacles? And so on and so forth. So learning from, taking the lessons from the literature on race and exclusion, on gender and exclusion, on LGBTQ and exclusion. There's a group of us looking at bringing those insights into the discussion about the relationship between disability and [discipline], both in organisational settings like universities, but also back to my original field in [previous discipline]. So that meeting took place this week and that may turn into, it will turn into some workshops and it might turn into a research project. But it brings together, it brings together my personal interest in disability, the idea of [topic] and also then the sort of [discipline] type of question as well. The idea being that we would want to see some changes to representation of people with disability in [area], both in universities and other settings. So the last thing I'd say, there is, I think it happens to some people in our sort of field at the end of their career, that there is a, there's a keenness to move slightly in the direction of activism and away from the thinking alone. And teaching is also a form of activism if you are a critical pedagogic leaning. So my teaching is informed by critical pedagogy, by the work of people like Paulo Freire. So my teaching about [discipline] is about letting people understand that they have permission to think differently about what these words mean and how the practice can be done. As opposed to the, the conventional, patriarchal, male, white, "normal", great Trumpian type proposition. So you can probably see where I'm coming from. I'm not a typical business school academic in that sense, because I've come out of the social science type of tradition with [a previous discipline] which by it's nature is interdisciplinary and relational. So that's a very long way of taking up your time.

##### Researcher

No, that's, that's really interesting. I wanted to pick up on something you said, talking about disability being a personal interest of yours and tying that in with your sort of research. So kind of on that note, how much kind of, I guess, autonomy do you have to research what you want to research and perhaps aim for certain journals where you want to publish?

##### Participant 20

You have, I suppose, because of my background, I don't concern myself too much with what the institution thinks or wants anymore. Because as a [role], I'm not included in the REF because I'm, I'm a pracademic type. So I'm not someone who's on what you might think of as a tenured type of chair track. It's not something that actually interests me, particularly. If I wanted a chair, I should have left [current institution] and gone to a new university for a chair, really, rather than a Russell group university. Because I'm slightly more vocationally oriented in the work that I do. But I have, I've always retained an interest in [PhD discipline] so I've published, generally speaking, what I've published in things like [example journals] is for REF-able purposes. I chose to publish the last piece in a book rather than an academic journal, which was, I was told to do, simply because I felt I wanted to publish the chapter in the book, to do a favour to the editors who I've been doing some work with for quite a while. So I'm slightly not, I think I'm very atypical, so you shouldn't take anything that I say as being necessarily relevant for the mainstream academic, for mainstream academic life. So I would say that essentially, for various reasons, because I made it clear it has to be like that, I've been left alone to pursue interests as I think they relate to what is now my principal interest, which is improving undergraduate [discipline] learning. So teaching about [discipline] to undergraduates differently and more creatively. So a creative, progressive approach to education at the undergraduate level. And so, the new, brand new all singing all dancing module we're designing that will run for the first time next autumn, it targets to be the best undergraduate [discipline] learning experience in the UK at least. And it's adopting a very eclectic, creative, artistically intense, alternative interdisciplinary approach, both to the method of teaching but also the subject materials that we use. So we will be having an afternoon on [discipline] and nonsense. We'll be having an afternoon on what [phenomena] can teach us about [discipline]. We'll be having an afternoon on the place of humour in [context] and also in terms of it being a device, slightly more academically, for deconstructing toxic propositions using metaphor and so on. So, I'm really interested, because it sort of comes out of a slightly artistic musical tradition as well. So, the [stakeholder group] will be involved. We've got actors and comedians, hopefully stand up comedians involved, as well as the conventional business school "CEO of a bank" type of session. So, what we are aiming to do is make the learning about [discipline] an experience. So, like a 1960s Woodstock Festival happening where you will wander through this module and have encounters and meetings and conversations and, and be exposed to discussions and ideas. There is a textbook we'll use for that, but we're not going to give you any answers. You're just going to accrete an understanding of what this thing means and some tips about practice that you will then, will then allow you to construct your own proposition. And whatever that proposition is, whilst we may have our own views about what [discipline] should be about, it's not for us to say, to say what you should be, how you should be. You would more usually find this as an approach to a course in the liberal arts department than you would in a business school. The interesting thing is, it's the most popular module on the undergraduate programme in the business school. So to cut a very long story short, that's what I'm really interested in at the moment. For me, it's about legacy. It's about learning legacy and leaving that approach also with the business school so that people, younger members of staff who also, because it is team taught, who're very keen on these sorts of slightly more experiential approaches to learning about business and aspects of business that they'll be able to develop on beyond me. So I'm in legacy, I suppose in this stage of my career, I'm in sort of legacy mode really. But, yeah, it's one of the most popular modules in the whole of the business school degree suite - undergraduate. And we're told by students who come in from other faculties because they could choose to come in from other faculties, that it's one of the best or popular courses, best courses they've done. And I think that's just testament to the fact that we adopt a particular approach to the teaching, which reflects what we think about [discipline], which is the whole approach to the teaching exercise, collective and collaborative and co-creating and all of that sort of stuff. So it's team taught, and also eclectic in the sense that there are people who are against [discipline] who teach on it. And there are people who used to run banks who teach on it, who are all for it. We're not making judgement calls about who's got it right.

##### Researcher

Great. Thank you. So you mentioned also that you're vocationally oriented, and you kind of want to see changes from what you're doing in terms of the disability project, you want, you want to see some kind of changes. Is that kind of aspiration to create impact, is that something that is kind of fostered in the environment of the business school? Or would you say that's more of a personal thing?

##### Participant 20

Yes, I think it is. The business school is very good at that, it is very keen on engagement. The real issue around this topic, if you like, around engagement, is what do we mean by engagement? So somebody like me doesn't, has chosen not to engage, in some of the conventional engagement activities because of the people that we're engaging with. It seems to me at this stage of my career that if we are into improving wealth spread, levelling up, with a co-creating sort of vibe running through it, a fairer, more just society and all that sort of stuff, then we should be thinking a little bit about who it is that we are willing to lend our grey matter to. And so I think that in some instances it wouldn't be fair of me to come into the engagement space with colleagues who are having to generate income streams from institutions. Including institutions of government, but businesses as well, that are what I would say wedded to a neoliberalist view of the world. A little too capitalistically oriented for me, and not at the including, neutralising, cooperative end of this sort of equation. And that's a decision, a strategic decision I have taken. I'm very relaxed about that. It doesn't mean to say that I don't, when called upon, occasionally have something to say about all of those things. But it's important that there's a firewall between I think what you might call a critical [discipline] type, and I wouldn't want to put me in a meeting with, for example, certain types of captains of industry running certain types of businesses where I am not comfortable with the nature of their operations. Without going into any details about who they might be. And that's just, a lot of younger academics cannot do that because you have to engage and be seen to engage. You get brownie points or REF points for engagement. But I think there is a really big question in higher education at the moment, and it's going to become a more trickier question. Whose money are we prepared to take? Where are we prepared to locate our offshore operations? Who are we prepared to get into bed with in order to generate cash? Now [another university] got themselves into a bit of a tangle with [controversial group] a few years back. I'm not sure that British higher education institutions should be hooking up with people like that. So, I'm exaggerating, you know, the language, but just to say if we believe that what we are teaching and researching is important, why would we lend our talent to people who… I mean, should I take Donald Trump's money? If Donald Trump's people wanted to come and learn about [discipline] from me? Should I take their money and teach them about [discipline]? If we are espousing values and ethics or values around social justice and fairness, equity and diversity and inclusion, why would we want to be associated with people who don't believe in those things? And whose actions are essentially the opposite of all of that? Polluting businesses, businesses that use child labour, corrupt businesses, businesses that manufacture things in China? I think these are important questions and universities, university leadership, often has been ducking them and ducking them too much, and I think it will come back to bite us all.

##### Researcher

Excellent. Thank you. So I'm aware we're almost at the end of the meeting now, so I'm happy to kind of finish up here. I don't want to take any more of your time.

##### Participant 20

What I would say is you're probably not talking to a very typical business school academic. There are lots of people like me in business schools, but they, generally speaking, have to keep a low profile because they're younger on the career trajectory, and want to teach in what we call a critical reflective mode, that is becoming more difficult in the sort of modern Americanized model of British higher education. It's still there. I think it's really important because it's about independent thinking, evidence based independent thinking and freedom of academic endeavour and the rest of it. My sense is that the pendulum will swing back more in that direction simply because of the way that the world is going on. Climate change, post Covid-19 and the rest of it. And essentially we cannot carry on doing what we've been doing. I think our teaching and our research needs to reflect facts that we need to be, you need to be promoting and giving students the skills to be successful in models of business, if you like business practice, that actually are sustainable and a bit more green and clean and a bit more fair and socially just and the rest of it. I think the heyday of the "take anybody's money" type of business school, I think those days are coming to an end. At [current institution] there's a really big push on responsible business. We have a dean who is very keen on diversity, on gender, for example, and LGBTQ inclusion. We haven't quite got disability right yet, but that's coming as well. So I think what has been interesting in [current institution] in particular in the last couple of years is that shift has already occurred from what you might think of as, what were really conventional sort of business schools. Supply chains and project management and all the rest of it. To the ideas that values and ethics and things like equality, diversity, inclusion and fairness need to play through the business school research and teaching agenda. And I think, I think we will head, fortunately for the world, more in that direction over the coming years.

##### Researcher

That's all really interesting. As I said, obviously, I will let you go, I won't take up any more of your time, but I do really appreciate chatting to you. It has been extremely interesting, as all of my conversations with interviewees are. It's extremely interesting and hearing your take on things is really helpful. So I thank you for that. And I'm very, very grateful for your time.

##### Participant 20

Okay, well good luck with the project and hope you get your PhD and all of that, and go out and do great things in the world.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Hopefully, fingers crossed. Thank you again. And best of luck with everything with you as well. And yeah. Take care, thank you. Bye.