##### Researcher

Okay, great. So obviously I've read your profile and stuff so I do know a bit about you, but I guess kind of in your own words, can you just tell me about your background, your career and your sort of current role please?

##### Participant 25

Yeah. Well, currently I'm a semi-retired [role] at [current institution], still working for them, mostly doing dissertation supervision and interviewing for recruitment on MBA courses. All of which can be done online and is being done online which is an advantage to many at the moment. My career is an odd one for a business school scholar. I graduated originally in [different subject] from [undergraduate institution] in [year]. I then worked for the [organisation], I was a [organisation] scholar in [subject]. I then worked for them for three to four years. I was on their high flying management scheme, they called it at the time the [scheme], where they interviewed about a thousand graduates every year, and took on around twelve. And I managed to get on that. It was quite unusual because I didn't really want to be a [profession] I find out. So I got on that scheme. Nearly everyone else on it was an Oxbridge graduate. And most of them were from the south, which I found interesting. I was the only one from [area]. Anyway, I worked for them, all over the country in various roles and... I come from a [profession] background, my father was a [role]. His father was a [role]. And around [year] there was a strike and everything, I was living in [city] at the time working at the headquarters. And we had [issue] all over [city] and the government was in peril. And it's amazing to me that [sector-specific issue], yet all the work where I worked seemed to carry on as normal, which I found very strange. And I found it, I kind of had a real problem with this. So for no apparent reason I resigned, left, and went home to [region]. No job lined up. They tried to persuade me, giving me extra salary and everything to stay, but I just didn't want to. I looked at the people who had risen in the organisation and the people who were in charge of me, and I was briefing at chairman level at the time. And I looked at these people and decided I didn't want to be one of them, that wasn't me at all. Anyway, I went home, no job, was getting near Christmas and sort of started looking at jobs. Then I noticed that a local school was advertising for teachers, [subject] teachers. And that was the age where you could become a [subject] teacher without training as a teacher. As long as you had a [subject area] degree. So I went for a very brief interview at this school, and they took me on as a teacher. So in [year] I found myself in front of a class. At the time I was about 22, 23, 24, something like that. Anyway, I looked about 14, so they made mincemeat of me, absolutely. But I found out during the next year that I really did enjoy teaching, but I didn't really want to be a school teacher. So I decided to go for post 16 teaching, further education. And trained, did a, applied for a [course] in FE and trained at [centre]. So I did a year of teacher training. I really enjoyed it and found there were a bunch of people from all sorts of different backgrounds. All of whom seemed to be a bit odd, didn't quite fit, like I never felt that I fitted. And ended up training as a [subject] teacher basically. And then after that I taught in colleges and further education. And that was, so I did about eleven years of teaching in FE. And then saw a job advertised for a [education role] and that was in [city]. Applied for that and became a [role] at [institute] which eventually became a university. And that job suited me, it really was an excellent job. I really enjoyed it. Because I was [working with] people who were coming out of industry, people with PhDs, people with all sorts. And enjoyed that very much indeed. But what I enjoyed the most was the opportunity to work abroad, setting up [activities] in various interesting places. So I did quite a lot of work in [countries], all sorts of places. Travelling for [employer], working with [organisations]. I enjoyed that very much. Gradually I realised that I was doing a lot of things on educational management. But although I'd done, with [first employer] a course in management studies, I had no managerial qualifications, so I thought I better do, so, I decided to apply for and do an MBA part time. And that was a [sub-discipline] MBA which was very appropriate for me at the time. And I did my MBA, and for my dissertation, I did [topic]. I really enjoyed doing this dissertation and was supervised by [academic] who is [role] in [another university] and is a very close friend. And at the end of this dissertation he said had I ever thought about doing a PhD, and this was [year]. And I hadn't, it never crossed my mind. But he said he thought that my dissertation was interesting, maybe I could do something, extend it. So we talked about that and I was going to do something with [country]. I decided to do something, all part time, I carried on working. So I decided I would start a PhD and I was going to do something on [country] and perhaps [another country]. And at that point I got a call to go and work on a [organisation] project for [employer] in [country], looking at [area]. And so my PhD proposal became transformed to this new context. And I ended up doing a PhD [topic]. So I did that PhD part time over five years, finished in [year], and carried on at [employer] but tried to do some research and write and publish at the time. And we had published a couple of little things from my master's dissertation. And we tried to do some other things and it was really difficult. I was working full time, and I'd done the PhD and was trying to write, trying to publish as well. And it all became very, very difficult, really difficult juggling these things. And in, I think in about [year], [PhD supervisor] suggested, there were jobs coming up at [previous institution] for lecturer in [sub-discipline]. And he suggested I might want to apply and I did. And then I was pretty ill on the day of the interview had a bad cold. I travelled down to [city], and the night before the interview I decided - this is ridiculous. I've got no confidence in myself as a university academic - I actually wrote about this. And pulled out and [PhD supervisor] was mortified and he was working at [another university] at the time. And anyway, so life went on and we got a publication accepted in [journal], which was a big deal at the time. I didn't realise how big a deal it was. I had no idea that it was such a good journal. So another job came up at [previous institution] and [PhD supervisor] said "look, why don't you apply for this? You've now got credibility with the publication". So I did. I found it strange to be interviewed in that, in that context, and to do a presentation in front of all the staff in [sub-discipline] at [previous institution]. That was pretty mortifying. But I got the job. So I became a business school academic almost by default, almost by accident. I had no real business school training or anything. And then since then, you know, I took to it like a duck to water really. It worked for me somehow and I focused mainly on [topics] and really enjoyed teaching. And of course I was teaching something I'd done a lot of, which really helps, and the experience of doing research all over the place in all sorts of contexts, education particularly, helps. I really enjoyed it. And then gradually, so I stayed at [previous institution] for about eleven years. I got to [position] in [previous institution], went up through [roles]. And then [current institution] asked me to, in [year], asked if I want to apply for [role], which I did. Came back with an offer from [current institution], [previous institution] were back and forth about whether they were going to match the salary - and they did that for about five or six weeks. So I said OK, I'm off, and went to [current institution]. And [current institution] were very good to me, and I'm still working there now. So that's a bit of, that's my story. Published a fair bit, done a fair bit of new research. You can see all of that in my CV and if you want, look up my publications. So, I'm a business school academic, I've never felt like a business person or a manager. I'm like someone who looks with a kind of critical and interested eye at businesspeople.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. Thank you. I want to know a bit more, I guess, about the journey you kind of took through the ranks. Obviously you said you started, you know, just kind of a normal lectureship and then [roles]. So that's obviously a very interesting career progression and obviously had to be successful to kind of get to that stage. So can you tell me a bit about I guess not so much if you had a strategy, but I guess kind of what you did to achieve, what did you prioritise? How did you manage your time? That kind of thing.

##### Participant 25

I definitely didn't have a strategy. I don't believe I've had a strategy at all in my life. Life happens to me, I don't plan it. That is exactly how I've felt since I was a child. Most good things happen to me seem to be serendipity. But, it dawned on me quite early at [previous institution], very surprisingly, that the main kind of factor in getting promotion or climbing the academic ladder was publication. And on top of that, its publication in certain journals, higher rated journals, four rated journals if you can. And publish as much as you possibly can. Teaching doesn't really count for much at all, or didn't count for much at all. Which I found strange because I was a teacher. And I'd always felt that was my my calling since I first tried it. And teaching didn't really count. But I was a good teacher. So the teaching side didn't worry me, I found it fairly easy to do, and enjoyable to do. So I'd got that covered. You need to take on another role, the role that was offered to me and I took on at [previous institution] was staff development. So basically I was back into teaching in a way. I ran staff training, sorted out people's progression to courses and things they wanted to do, and helped out with staff who were not doing very well, observed their teaching, helped them on top of everything else. But what was amazing to me was that I was given all this time to research and publish, to write, and my teaching was minimal. I had something like, at [previous institution] I couldn't believe it, I got something like 20 hours teaching for the year, for the entire academic year. Teaching master's students [topic] mostly. And okay, there was associated big marking loads and things like that because we're talking about 200 or 300 master's students at time. I know that doesn't sound that big now with some of the undergraduate groups I see. But what I found amazing was that I'd got minimal teaching. Research and publication, which I found enjoyable and had always been a side line, staff development, which I found enjoyable anyway, and I'd come from a position where working at [previous employer], I've got something like 400 to 500 hours of teaching a year, teaching practice visits all over the [region], and I had another admin role - I was in charge of various courses. I was head of the [team], head of all sorts. As well as travelling and doing all the other research and things. My life was impossible. It was just... and any research and publication was icing on the cake and they didn't give a toss about that. The main thing was to get all the jobs done. So I'd gone from one culture to a completely different culture. I found it quite disorienting and I felt so lucky. I kept wondering, what should I be doing? And I could not believe some people who had only 12 hours teaching a year would complain if they got an extra class to teach. So the culture change was a huge experience for me. So I found it, I suppose the word is luxurious. I was given my own office, big office. I got secretarial support, I got admin support, people would fill in all your forms for you, sort out all your travel, and all I had to do was the actual physical research, which I really enjoyed very much, and the writing, collaborating with colleagues, and going to conferences. One year at [previous institution] I went to five international conferences, including a couple of times to the States for different conferences, went to the [professional association] one to [luxury location] for a conference. I just thought I'd won the lottery, really. So the culture was something... I can't remember your original question?

##### Researcher

It was about, I guess, kind of the journey through the ranks.

##### Participant 25

So, the way to get up there was publication. So what I did was publish in [journals], and each time your CV got better than you'd apply for promotion. And it was whether you got recommended for it. And it seemed every two years I went up a grade, eventually getting to be [position]. And I thought it was a doddle compared with everything else I'd had to do in previous jobs, where promotion was very very difficult to get, and there was no clear pathway. But the idea that publication, research and publication was the key issue, and I think that still applies. Although it's become much harder because I think the journals are more picky. It's harder to get in four rated journals than a book. And some of the top universities are asking you, business school scholars, particularly, from a very early career stage, to be publishing in top American journals. Which I never aspired to. I just think I have nothing in common with most of the Academy of Management publications. Does that answer your question?

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely, definitely, definitely. That's a very interesting answer. So you mentioned obviously publications being absolutely key and the kind of culture difference from when you were at [previous employer] where teaching was obviously the kind of valued thing, and then research being much more kind of valued at [previous institution] and [current institution]. Why do you think that research from publications are so key for advancing in an academic career within a business school?

##### Participant 25

That's a good question.

##### Researcher

Or, I guess, a more research-intensive business school, you know, why do you think that is the case?

##### Participant 25

Well, you know, business schools try very hard to... in general, my impression is that business schools in universities are looked down by the rest of the university, particularly in places like [current institution], I think, which have an old, very old academic tradition. And business schools, I think, are seen by many universities as A, cash cows, and B, schools of trade and commerce. So light on theory, not really academic and scholarly. And I think that persists. Someone will say to you "what do you do?" "Oh, I'm a university [role]". "Oh yes, what sort of subject?" "Business, in a business school". "Oh". And they'll wander off. And if you said Latin or something like that, you'd be fine. But I think in answer to your question that, so, business schools may be looked down upon a little as being inferior in some way. So what you do when you're seen as academically inferior is you try to claim your academic credibility as highly as you can by being focused entirely on academic pursuit and publication in what are regarded as the top journals in your field. I don't know that that's true, or whether anybody's consciously done that, but it seems to me that that's one of the ways that type of progression within a business school has become important. I suppose the other, the other thing now of late, is bringing in money, bringing money from industry, the bigger money you can get or grants, getting big grants, they're the other facts that help you. And you, and then interestingly, when people do, what they do is buy out their teaching. So teaching, again, doesn't really count for much because as soon as you get enough money not to do it and you can get somebody else to do it for you, that's what you do. So I think, yeah, the publication route, I don't think... with the recent research assessment exercises, they've been focusing on impact statements. And people have had to scrabble around trying to prove how much impact their research has had. A lot of it's been post hoc rationalisation, I think. I think that's become more and more important and that's coming from government I suppose.

##### Researcher

Excellent, thank you. That's very interesting. I want to, something you mentioned in a previous answer about, I think it was kind of the time before you started working at [previous institution] when you were still working at [previous employer] and doing your PhD part time. You know, you were juggling a lot of different things and it was quite an intense kind of workload. Has that ever kind of been replicated at any point in your academic career, sort of post PhD whilst working at [previous institution] or [current institution]? Have you had any time where you've felt that that is the case again? That you're juggling a lot of different things, or has it been generally quite okay?

##### Participant 25

I've generally felt fairly relaxed about my work life since I left [previous employer]. Because I seem to have much more time to do everything. It may be what I was used to compared with what many of my colleagues were used to. I thought, I thought my life was luxurious. As I said, they thought that they were hard done by. Obviously when you're teaching during the teaching time, when you've got huge, huge groups and you're being asked all the time for help and advice online and offline and in the street and when you've got lectures to do - plus, you may have a conference coming up or you may be presenting papers somewhere, you may have publications in review, you know, revising and resubmitting things. Sometimes it can get a bit hectic, but never to the extent that I felt that I was being overworked. No, I don't think so. And of course, Parkinson's law applies in general in your life, doesn't it? That work expands to fill the time available. Now I generally do about four interviews a week now for MBA candidates online and I've had two dissertation supervisions this year, and I'm at a 0.2 contract. But sometimes that feels a lot. I've got four interview this week, that means, that's probably 4 hours of actual work, half an hour interview, half an hour filling in the forms. And sometimes that can feel more than enough - but then again, I'm [age], most of my friends are well retired and not doing anything much. So perhaps that's not surprising. I don't know. But, no, I don't think so, not since [previous employer].

##### Researcher

Okay. That's good. So you mentioned the kind of impact statements that were brought in following the RAE, which is obviously now the REF. So I guess what I want to know has there been any kind of expectation on you during your time at [previous institution] and [current institution] to kind of engage in impact activities? Did you ever feel there was anything expected of you in that regard?

##### Participant 25

No, I don't think so. I managed to avoid... I applied for about four or five big grants and the amount of time, you'll know, I don't whether you've applied for any, but you will know, you'll have to apply for the [research council], and the amount of time and work that goes into those applications is huge. And for all the four or five, none of them were successful. So I just saw it as just a waste of time. My research tended to be ethnographic qualitative, generally, quite critical. I couldn't get any money. I didn't need any money for most of it. I got a couple of few small grants but I didn't really need money any more than you need money for what you're doing. You don't need money for this sort of research. This is the sort of thing I did. So when I went to [current institution] I was interviewed for the role. And it's a big, the usual horseshoes of interviews in front of you with various stakeholders, the vice chancellor in the middle and, and questions are all going around. And there must have been 20, 30 academics in the room. And at one point, I can't remember who it was who said, "and if we appoint you to [role] at [current institution] how will you be applying for funding? What grants will you be applying for?" And it was great luxury because I was already a [role] at [previous institution], I wasn't that bothered if I got the [current institution] job or not. So it was great. I just said, "well, no, I'm not going to apply for any more grants, I've applied for four or five, huge amount of work, they were all rated by reviewers as A or B", or whatever it was at the time, "and I didn't get any of them, they were all turned down". So I saw it as a huge waste of my time. And round the horseshoe of the panel, lots of the panel were sympathetic because they've all been through the same. But I had the luxury, I was [age] at the time, I had the luxury of "I don't care whether you appoint me or not, but no, I'm not going to", and I was able to be totally honest. And I don't think anybody really, apart from citations, citation index, nobody was really asking me to show any impact of my work and I didn't come into it. I sometimes help people with writing their impact case studies because I'm not a bad writer so I could help, I could read and help with impact case studies. I never felt any need to claim any impact for my research.

##### Researcher

And would you say that the kind of research you did, did it kind of represent a kind of obvious way of impacting society or practitioners or was your research I guess more kind of, you know, the kind of research that someone might look at and they wouldn't necessarily expect that to, you know, feed into society or practice or policy or anything?

##### Participant 25

I never did any research expecting it to fit into practice or policy. All my research I did because I was interested in it.

##### Researcher

Okay. Yeah.

##### Participant 25

And it was all about things that I experienced. All my work's been of interest, I'm not doing anything for impact. A couple of interesting bits and bobs, but you'll see you that... if any of my publications you're interested in, let me know if you can't get hold of them, I will send you, well, you can get access to my PhD if you want, methodologically it might be useful for you.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Okay. That's interesting. I guess, so, in your experience, no real pressure to engage in impact. Do you think that is kind of reflective of the general kind of culture of the business schools that you worked at? Do you think that was generally the kind of same experience of everyone?

##### Participant 25

It has been. But I think it's changing quite rapidly. It's becoming much more important to have impact, to get more money. And as I said earlier on, to publish in even greater journals. As a young academic academic, you're going to face... in fact, I'll tell you a story of a paper that [colleagues] wrote. This paper, they started off, based on some old data of [topic], they started with ASQ, Administrative Science Quarterly, eventually got rejected there. They went to AMR, eventually got rejected there. JMS rejected, Organisation Studies rejected. This is, some of them, after review as well and changing it all the time. And then Human Relations. Eventually it ended up in [ABS 2 journal]. I would have given up years before. To took six years, seven years, something like that. Crazy. Absolutely crazy. It's a difficult road for academics, particularly young academics. When I started, I had no idea. I had no idea of the value that [journal] publication, the first one. And when I moved from [previous employer] to [previous institution] I had no idea what sort of a leap it was at the time. And it was something like, it was like going from the Conference to Premiership in one go. It was crazy. And I didn't understand it at all.

##### Researcher

Did you ever feel, I guess, more at the start, more so than towards the more progressed area of your career, did you ever feel as if you had kind of imposter syndrome or any of that kind of thing?

##### Participant 25

I still feel that completely. I've felt that all my life. Yeah, and certainly in the business school I always felt an imposter. And when I go to conferences and meet young academics who have all the speaking ability, all the fluency, all the, you know, I don't have it. My active vocabulary is nowhere near the size of most young academics who have come through the sociological or that kind of route. I find it very, very difficult to speak like that. I'm a teacher - all my life I've been taught to simplify, and to speak, you know, to make things understandable. And it strikes me, the ability to do the opposite, is one of the things that kind of earmarks top, especially young academics. I can't talk like that, I never have been able to. I talk as a simplifier. Make it easy for people to understand me. And imposter syndrome, I didn't even know it was called that until fairly recently, but I've felt that all my life, yeah. I felt it even going to grammar school.

##### Researcher

And I guess what I want to know is how have you kind of dealt with that throughout your kind of career? As obviously, you know, it hasn't held you back I would say.

##### Participant 25

Well, that's probably how I've dealt with it. Is to, is to put my money where my mouth isn't, really, because I don't have the verbal fluency or the carapace of academic, I don't know what it is, but I don't have it. So what I've done is try and do what you need to do and do that well. So I could teach and I can write and publish, I can do research, I can do this sort of research. I really enjoy talking to people. Yeah. I mean, I've always had an absolute fear of speaking in public, and yet I've lectured all over the world in all sorts of situations. Prepare. I've just, just worked hard at preparing all the things I do really. My imposter syndrome is still very strong within me.

##### Researcher

And I'm conscious we are coming towards the end of the hour.

##### Participant 25

That's okay, you can carry on as long as you want to.

##### Researcher

Okay. I've got, I've kind of got two more things that I want to get through. So the first thing I want to mention is the pandemic and obviously, like you said, you're on a 0.2 contract at the moment. So, you know, you're obviously not a full member of staff, but you might have some kind of insight or opinions in this area. I guess I'd be interested to know kind of personally for you have things workwise changed at all since the pandemic? Like, do you feel as if your priorities have had to change or if the priorities of the school have had to change? What is your kind of insight on that?

##### Participant 25

For me the actual nature of my work hasn't changed at all because I'm doing it mostly online, I live in [another area] and work in [city]. So I never go there. Very rarely. But I know that the nature of work has changed for my colleagues. Teaching is all online and they're finding it very, very hard indeed. Especially preparation for teaching. Yeah. So it's, and the lack of social contact is a huge loss. I would have found it extremely difficult. You know, the disproportionate amount of work you have to put in for a short online lecture or video clip or whatever it is they do. It's changed all of university life. It's not the same experience for students or staff. And I think it will probably be, in some places, a huge permanent change. Some places won't recover. I see some universities going down.

##### Researcher

And I guess speaking about your, if we're looking at your kind of more research active colleagues, who perhaps, you know, do teaching as well, but they're definitely more research focused. Have you heard anything from them or are you getting the kind of impression from them that they have had to, I guess, deal with their research in a different way?

##### Participant 25

They have. I'm sure they have. And not only just in terms of time and access for people and things, but funding has become much harder to get. And just straightforward, small amounts of funding for travel and things like that are... new limits have been placed on that within the university. So yeah, I think everyone's research activity has been reduced and made more difficult.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. So I pretty much just have one more last thing I want to ask in terms of an actual kind of question, because we've almost basically covered everything I want to talk about. So I want to ask, I guess from your own experience and your own sort of journey, what would your biggest piece of advice be to junior academics who want to sort of climb that career ladder and get into a higher kind of level of seniority within a business school?

##### Participant 25

Find a mentor to help you with your research and publication. Write with them, if they can, but find one who you like and get on with and you respect, and will give you first authorship with any work that is by you. They may want to co-author but don't, don't go with people who want to claim first authorship. Find a good mentor. Usually your supervisor if you're lucky. Work hard at the publication, at the writing and publication. Don't be, don't be disheartened by rejection because you're going to get rejected, everyone does. Aim high. And when you teach, try and be you, try and be yourself. Don't try to be someone else. The temptation to try and use other language than your own, it's a complete waste of time. When I wrote [article] I presented it at, I think at an American conference, the [conference], I presented a paper on becoming an academic, really. And talking about how difficult I found it and how some of the experiences are really... I was very open and honest in this presentation. And this American guy who was in the chair of this conference presentation, I've never forgotten this, he said, "you're really brave for exposing yourself". You know, I always recommend being open and being honest and being, being who you are, you know, not trying to be someone else. He saw that as exposing yourself, making yourself vulnerable. I saw it the opposite way round. I can't think what else, really. Try not to be intimidated by the people who set out to intimidate you. There are a lot who will do that in academia. And enjoy yourself. Go to conferences.

##### Researcher

Yeah. That's all been really useful. I've really enjoyed talking to you and hearing about all experiences. I don't have any other kind of direct questions, so unless there is anything else you feel is important?

##### Participant 25

No, but feel free to come back to me if you want.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 25

When you look at it, if you have any further questions.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 25

And happy to advise in any way I can.

##### Researcher

Thank you.

##### Participant 25

And maybe if you want something reading some time, very happy to read for you.

##### Researcher

Okay, wonderful thank you. That's very nice of you to offer, thank you very much for that. Yeah. OK. Great. Thank you. I'll let you go now and have a nice rest of the day. Thank you so much for your time.