##### Researcher

So, I've had a look at your profile. So I know a bit about you from that, but in your own words, can you just tell me a bit about yourself in terms of your background, your career and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 28

Yeah. Absolutely. So I'm [name], I'm a [role] at [current institution] in [sub-discipline]. I'm also the director of the [research centre]. I spent pretty much ten years in the private sector first and then did an MBA thinking I would stay in the private sector, but loved the MBA and so stuck around in the academic sector and eventually did another master's and a PhD in order to transition into an academic career, basically. So I've been about ten years now in that academic career, a little bit interrupted due to having two children. But here I am.

##### Researcher

Excellent. And you said that, so you said you did an MBA and that kind of inspired you to move into an academic career. What about the kind of academic life was it that you sort of enjoyed and wanted to sort of start a career in?

##### Participant 28

I guess I like, well, I like research in the sense of understanding why things happen and how things happen and enacting change. I love learning and studying stuff. And then also very soon on in sort of trying out an academic life if you want, I found that I absolutely love teaching and so my passion would be, it is teaching and working with students on things.

##### Researcher

Okay. Excellent. And in terms of what you're doing at the moment then, obviously you're director of the research centre, but in terms of your kind of research and teaching as well alongside that admin, what is your kind of workload at the moment, what are your kind of responsibilities?

##### Participant 28

So I teach a first year undergraduate course. I'm course organiser for that. Although this year, for the first time, I am a co-course organiser, which means I've finally got someone helping. And that is our first year undergraduate course, it's compulsory for all of our first years coming into the business school. So that is normally about 350 students, this year about 450 students. I teach an elective in our MBA programme, which is a one week intensive elective on [topic]. And I also am part of the teaching team of the MBA [course], and I teach the [topic] parts.

##### Researcher

Okay. And you mentioned that first year undergraduate module, I read on your profile that you kind of got that up and running and it became a compulsory module for all first years. Was that something you were quite passionate about doing, that sort of, that kind of responsible education?

##### Participant 28

So how that came about is that, I was just coming back from my second and last - definitely last - maternity leave.

##### Researcher

Haha.

##### Participant 28

I had a colleague who had taken over my courses whilst I was on maternity leave and she was doing well and she loved them and she was happy with them and I was happy for her to keep what were previously my courses, as it were, and happy to kind of look around for some new challenges if you like. And at that time I became aware that there was some thoughts that our first year offering wasn't good enough. And the dean kind of heard that I was interested and came to me and asked if I would be willing to redesign our first year programme and offering. So it was very fortuitous but I was interested. And basically someone needed to do it, and no one wanted to. So I stepped in and the reason I wanted to is that first year had become undervalued by academic staff. It was the course that you sort of, the programme that you gave new people or people who didn't have enough to teach or didn't run their own course or that sort of thing. It was taught at the time in a modular way. So each group, each disciplinary group would provide someone to teach the four or five weeks on marketing or the four or five weeks on strategy, and it was all very modular and separate for the students. So, it was also a full year course. So we divided it up into two one semester courses and I took on the first one, first semester, so I'm the first academic the students see. And as part of that I included some study skills stuff, I would say, in that first course, the first year I ran it. I was incredibly naïve about the students. So I've only ever taught, before that I only ever taught postgraduates or undergraduates doing an elective with me. So I taught people passionate about what I do. And now I was teaching first years who are being forced to do my course, and straight out of school, and there's a bit of an attitude here, especially from, well, don't quote me on this part, but public school kids who come up to [current institution], that the first year is just a load of rubbish and not difficult and you don't even have to work hard. And so I didn't know any of this. And so I went in with this exciting content and stuff and I had some students excited, but a lot who perhaps it didn't hit the mark with. And what I was looking for was a textbook that would help them understand what university is for, because what I realised is no one's told students what university is for. They just go, right? And there was no textbook available. So I realised I had to write my own textbook. So I spent the next few years teaching this course, finessing that - it's not study skills - that critical thinking content, and transitioning students into studies. So I sometimes say, and don't take me too literally here, but I don't care if students learn nothing in their course with me. I care if, by the end of that course, they feel like they are part of the university, part of the business school, and they understand what learning at university is, and at least the start of how to do that. That's my aim. Yeah, so that's been the focus. And the book is out. And the reason I wrote the book is that I realised that it wasn't just my students who people hadn't talked to, it was all university students who didn't know what university was for. They thought university, because of school, was to learn stuff and repeat it. And that's of no use to anyone.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. When you talk about first year students, because, you know, the first year of an undergraduate degree here doesn't count towards the final grade, so it's interesting you talk about that attitude.

##### Participant 28

I address that point specifically in the book about why, first of all, why doesn't it count, right? And there are good reasons for it not to count. And it's not so you can party. And secondly, why does that mean that you still need to work hard? Whilst balancing a social life - there's no question that this is about a social transition too, so the book is not preachy. It's not saying work, you know, 12 hours a day, I absolutely don't say that. Anyway, sorry, you don't want to hear about my book. Happy to focus on your research question.

##### Researcher

Haha. That's really interesting. Thank you. I'm also interested in your sort of title, and your kind of discipline, it's very interdisciplinary, it's very, I would say, unique for a business school as well. I'm kind of interested to know, before you did your MBA, what was your kind of disciplinary background? And did you kind of envision that you would be entering this kind of realm from that kind of background?

##### Participant 28

So my undergraduate was in [management]. So that's what we call a business studies undergraduate in [home country]. And I did an honours year as well. That was kind of in general management, but [management sub-discipline], if you wanted to specify. But really it was more general. And I was in kind of in the [department] in the small business I worked for. So I would say my disciplinary background is [areas] - pre-MBA. And I did the MBA which was fine, and then, you know, I was working in the [research centre], which is unusual already. And one of the first things we did was actually, initially, we were based in the [alternative sub-discipline] group, so we needed a disciplinary home because we have to be in a discipline, we had to be in one of the groups for the disciplines. And so [alternative sub-discipline] had us and that was fine in itself, but wasn't really us. And then we set up an MSs in [subject] which has been very successful. And because of that, we ended up moving into the [another alternative sub-discipline] group, and a lot of my colleagues work on [topics] et cetera. So for that reason, I am in the [alternative sub-discipline] group, which is madness, because if I were in any group at all, it would be [more relevant sub-disciplines] and I'd be happy in either of those groups. But I'm not. I'm in [alternative sub-discipline], and that is weird. It is possible one day we might become our own group, but at the moment at the business school, we have disciplinary based groups. So my area isn't a discipline, it's a topic. Yeah, it is unusual and not necessarily very good.

##### Researcher

Why would you say not so good?

##### Participant 28

I don't mind so much about the identity issue. I'm happy with the [subject area] identity. It doesn't need a discipline because it's not, it is by definition interdisciplinary. More like, my PhD students, you know, they have to, they get kind of allocated into the [sub-discipline] group, even though none of them should be in that group. So they may sort of move into whatever their co-supervisors group is, so I've got some who are in the [alternative sub-disciplines] groups because their PhDs are more relevant there. So, it's just a bit, kind of, whereas some of the groups - that's what our disciplines are called - they've got quite a nice community and so yeah, it might be nice to do that. But actually the [research centre] which I run, we've got our own community. So it doesn't matter too much. But it's not ideal.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. So obviously, very kind of passionate about the teaching side, but you also run this research centre. So what are the kind of expectations on you in terms of research and research outputs?

##### Participant 28

So, it is interesting about me running the research centre. I'm not actually a prolific researcher, and I don't mind that, I'm comfortable with that as an academic. So why do I run a research centre? So there's a couple of reasons. One is that we had two centres. But they were separate, one was a proper research centre, one was sort of like a more loose initiative, and neither of them were really pulling their weight, if you want. Neither of them were really living up to the expectations. And the exec team at the business school decided that they should come together, which was the right decision, but they needed someone to drive it and to run it. And it became very clear that really I was best placed person to do that, because politically, there were going to be some issues with bringing the two centres together. And also we needed someone who was going to commit to it. So the way these centres die is when you don't have someone willing to commit to it and do the work. So I had to make a decision, because I'm so passionate about the centre, it wasn't ideal timing for me to take this on. I would've rather someone else took it on. And then I might step up in in a few years. But someone had to do it. And I was the right person. So that's why I took it on. Not because I'm, I was desperate for it, but when I take something, I commit to it. So that's why I'm driving it. It's a little odd for a couple of reasons. One is I'm not a prolific researcher. I do some research, I get some good publications, and that's something I do, but it's not my massive passion. Secondly, I'm quite junior. This is my second career. So even though I'm not young, I am only a [role] at this point. And typically a research centre would be run by someone more senior than me. And probably, if I might say, should be run by someone more senior than me. But again, I was the right person for it. And even though I'm only [role], I do have ten years in the private sector before my academic career, so it still made sense. And there was some political reasons why it was a good idea for me to run it. And I wanted to see it succeed, and if that meant it had to be me, it had to be me. So, but, I love doing it. But my aim is not to be running this for the next ten years. My aim is to get some significant funding into the centre and then recruit our next person who is the right person if that makes sense.

##### Researcher

Yeah, that makes sense. Thank you. And another thing I wanted to talk about in addition to this admin, research, teaching side, is also the kind of impact side of academia. And you mentioned something before I started recording at the start about a meeting with a client. I would be interested to hear what that is, is that like a kind of consultancy thing you do on the side as well?

##### Participant 28

Yeah, so, that one is not. So we are allowed to do, I think it's 30 days of consulting, I think. Paid separately, paid privately. The idea being - first of all academics are paid terribly anyway - but if academics do that, then we stay close to industry and that helps our research. So it's not, it's not exclusive, you know? Consulting to businesses helps our research, even if it isn't our research. However, that also includes our days of executive education. So the meeting at four is about an executive education programme. So one of the massive areas of interest for our centre at the moment is exec education Last year - this is public so I can tell you - last year we ran a 1000 person training programme for [company], training a thousand of their colleagues in [topic], five modules over the course of three months. And one of those modules, a pared back version, it looks like it might be going out to their entire company. So that's 60,000 people. So we do a lot of executive education. And that's a real way of getting impact, we are an impact centre, which is good and great obviously. And it's a good income steam. But it can get a bit bitty. So, you know, here's a bit here, here's a bit there, and there's a lot of work that goes into these programmes. And so once you've established that relationship it is important to try and take it up a level and get a more partnership approach. So get some more significant funding if you want to get more scale. So the biggest problem with our research centre at the moment is we do not have enough people for what we're trying to achieve or even what we're being asked to do. So we need more people. So it's about doing the work, the exec education and things, partly because it's useful, no doubt, but partly because it starts that relationship, it proves we're good, it proves we know what we know. But if all that ends up being is just ongoing exec education, it probably isn't achieving our aims and we want to take it up a level.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. You said that you're an impact centre, so obviously there is kind of a very explicit expectation of that centre and the members within it to engage in impact activities and sort of external stakeholders. Do you think that's quite a unique thing for your group and for your kind of interdisciplinary area because obviously not all kinds of researchers would perhaps have those kind of opportunities? Do you feel like you're in quite a unique position?

##### Participant 28

Potentially. But I do feel like we are a first mover in the trend as we're going to see it. You know, REF is going to be more and more focused on impact. I think we had, and don't quote me on these numbers - if you need them, I'll have to check them - but I think we submitted five impact case studies as a business school, and I think three of them were in our area. I can't remember the exact numbers. You know, we, impact is becoming more important across the whole business school spectrum, and potentially, across the whole university. However, I'm interested in [sustainability topics]. We need change for that to occur. Right? We need to be successful in our aim, I guess, to avoid the devastating effects of climate change. But that doesn't mean that I think all university programmes need to have impact in that way. The kind of the corporatisation of universities or corporatisation of knowledge... I think there are areas where knowledge is important for knowledge sake, where we are humans and we are interested in stuff. You know, if someone wants to spend their time investigating the impact of Jane Austen's books on 18th century lives of women, I think that's okay. I don't subscribe to the idea of "well, that's not going to change the economic system so why is it important?" So even though I'm passionate about impact because climate change is a problem, and we need to fix it, and sustainability is a problem, we need to fix it, and business is one of the things doing that, I'm not going to extend that to say "therefore, universities should only be focused on impact" - because we don't know what research, learning will be useful one day. And also when you've got students learning English literature or history or anthropology or, you know, geology, even if they don't end up being anthropologists or geologists, they're learning, they're becoming critical thinkers, right? So even though I'm passionate about impact for me and my work and my centre, and I would argue that the business school should be, it doesn't mean I think that all of the university needs to have that focus.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's a really interesting stance on that actually, thank you for that. I'm conscious we don't have long until you need to be in a meeting. I don't want to keep you right up until four because obviously you need to get off and then get on another one. So I'll make this my final question because we have covered everything I kind of wanted to talk about. So you mentioned, just one thing you mentioned, about being the leader of that research centre is something you don't want to be doing over the next ten years - you would like to build it up and then hand it off to someone. So based on the kind of premise of looking to the future and kind of where you might want to be, I guess this is a bit of a two-parter. A, where would you like to be in ten years time? And B, do you have, like, a specific strategy in mind of how you would perhaps get there, like what you might have to prioritise? And even, is there anything you've been doing up until this point to get where you are now? In terms of your career and what you're prioritising and how you deal with quite a big workload, from what I can tell?

##### Participant 28

Yes, very big work. Well, I still only work four days a week, which you wouldn't believe. So the first part of the question was, where do I want to be in ten years? Ten years, I want to be a [senior role]. Does it matter, titles? I deserve to be so I should be so yes, it does matter. But not for kind of labelling reasons, but for reflection reasons of what I do and the seniority I already, I already have. It also annoys me that I do more work than a lot of our [senior colleagues] sometimes. Don't quote me on that! And don't get paid as much and don't get the same recognition. So I definitely want to be a [senior role]. I want to be influencing as many students as I can. I think I sort of have to be careful about whether I focus on influencing students or influencing corporate business, and I think my special skill set and approach is very effective for students. And I know I have changed people's lives, so I think I'm probably more likely to be in that space, which is probably why I said I don't want to be running the centre. I wouldn't say no to running the centre, I just think we could have someone else. I would want the centre to be running though, and I would want it to be very well funded, and at the moment I'm doing a lot of work for the centre which I shouldn't be doing. We should have some administrative support. Because it's a waste of my brain that I'm doing that, does that make sense? Strategy to get there... I've had to jump through a lot of hoops to get where I am now. Ten years in private sector was counted for absolutely zero in relation to me getting promoted. Zero. And that is incredibly frustrating. I mean, it counts because it helps me, who I am, but it doesn't actually help in whether they think I should get a job or should get promoted, et cetera. So I had to jump through hoops, I had to jump through a hoop of getting a PhD, I had to jump through a hoop of getting a publication that was deemed worthy of lectureship because I started as an early career fellow, even though I was in my 30s. And yes, I'm in a better place now. My next step will be a promotion to [role]. Typically, that is a very difficult promotion to get internally. I can imagine that with university budgets, that will be more so. I've heard that - I've not heard, I know - that people say the easiest way to get it is by getting an offer from somewhere else, and then if your university want to keep you, you have to match it. I've found that really disingenuous. I find that really insincere. But what am I going to do if that's how I get a promotion? Getting a promotion is so hard. So much time filling in forms, justifying it with evidence, with everything. And ultimately, you get promoted if you can demonstrate that you're already functioning at the level above. So what you have to do is work for free for a year at the level above to get promoted. And that, I hate it. It actually angers me. So I'm not looking forward to that process because it will just annoy me. I don't care particularly about the money. So that's not what it's about, but I just have to keep jumping through these hoops. So that's frustrating. I don't know, does that answer all those parts of the question?

##### Researcher

Yeah. No, absolutely. It's really interesting. Yeah, no, that's excellent. And I'm very conscious. So thank you very much, and I've got a whole page of notes, which is a good sign.

##### Participant 28

Great, well do come back to me if you have any clarifying questions. Very happy for that. And I'd love to see a summary of your research once you've got it, I know these things take forever. I only just sent out, a couple of years ago, a summary of my PhD research to my PhD people.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 28

But I'd love to see it though.

##### Researcher

Oh, thank you. That's great, I'll make a note of that.

##### Participant 28

Good luck with it.

##### Researcher

Thank you very much. Thank you. And best of luck with everything with you as well. And enjoy your next meeting. Bye.