##### Researcher

Okay, so obviously I've read about you on your profile. So I know a little bit about you from that, but I guess kind of in your own words, could you just tell me about yourself in terms of your background, your career to date and your current role, please?

##### Participant 32

Yeah. I'm a [role] in [discipline] at the business school in [current institution]. And before coming here, I was part of a postdoc project, state funded project, in a role as a postdoc in [foreign city]. However, given that I got the offer from [current institution], I decided to stop that early and start here. And before that I completed my PhD in [home country]. And, yeah, I don't know how deep or to what degree I should go in, but my research is mostly very practitioner driven and problem oriented. So I've done my undergrad as well as my master's in schools that are - I don't think you have them in the UK - I think it's called a University of Applied Sciences. So all the professors also have a real job. So they all work 50% as a practitioner and 50% as a professor. And that's how my education has been. And all the projects ever since that I've been engaged in have always had a very strong practitioner focus.

##### Researcher

Okay. And so obviously going into undergraduate and master's, like you said, these kind of applied science universities, how did you then, I guess, make your way into academia? What was it that kind of inspired you to have an academic career as opposed to a career in practice or whatever?

##### Participant 32

To be honest, it's a little bit... I don't know, I guess a stupid reason. But in my undergrad, a precondition was to do a six month internship. And doing that every single day was an absolute nightmare. I thought it was so horrible to work as a random somebody in a random multinational corporation. I was at something that's called [organisation] - I don't know if you know them - they produce [products] and stuff like that. So they're quite big. And it was just horrifying. So doing that, I realised I definitely don't want to work in an MNC. And from everyone that works in smaller businesses, I learned that it's just as horrible and you're completely exploited. So I thought going into academia, I would have all the freedom and could decide on my own, like, when I work and how much I work and just have so much more freedom. So this is what was really the first intention beyond any kind of interest.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. And I guess the next thing I would kind of want to ask is that, could you tell me, so you mentioned that you're a [role] at the moment - could you tell me, I guess, what your current kind of responsibilities are in terms of different aspects of the job? So obviously you'll have research and that kind of thing, but could you just tell me generally at the moment what you're kind of working on?

##### Participant 32

Yeah, it's quite interesting, actually. So going to my postdoc in [foreign city], it was like three professors and three postdocs kind of project, so very senior and basically one professor and one postdoc per module. And then all the postdocs would interact but had their own module. However, it was like super team work based, whereas now in [current institution], it was supposed to be set up like that, but Covid-19 basically destroyed the research design, and now I'm completely on my own because the PhD student that we had who should've joined the project, she didn't want to because she didn't like somebody else who was also involved in the project. So she stopped. And then at the end of the day, it's only me and my boss sadly. She's the most amazing person, but she's so over committed that she has zero time whatsoever. So I'm doing everything from data collection, analysis, everything. It's like another small PhD, in essence, where you conduct your own research project. And she's leading it and she's giving feedback, and she's the formal representative because it's a corporate funded project. But it's not like in [foreign city] where it was more like you're co-analysing things and you're together in the data or so. So it was a very shared responsibility, which I think from a research point of view, is quite valuable because we all know that qualitative research is highly criticised for being very subjective, so I really appreciate working in teams when it comes to qualitative research. But yeah, due to Covid-19, it should have been different from the outset. But right now that's the scope of my responsibilities.

##### Researcher

OK, that's interesting. And is your kind of I guess your kind of contract - or your kind of obligations, are they 100% research or is there also any kind of teaching or admin at all as well?

##### Participant 32

You know, I think, so that's also interesting. I don't know if it's helpful for you or not - and if I say anything that's useless then just interrupt me and ask a different question - but I keep on comparing [foreign institution] and [current institution]. In both settings I have officially a 100% research contract, but I think they always put like a 10% admin clause in it. And in [foreign institution] basically, after two months, they wanted to force me into teaching, and also they did force me into supervising master's thesis. Simply because it was like this thing rolls downhill kind of principle, where the full professor gave all the responsibility to the associate professor, who gave all the responsibility to an assistant professor - the assistant professor was crazy under pressure given the tenure track, so he would give me all the rubbish that he didn't want to do in order to manage to go through the tenure track. And I was completely robust because I was like, no way I'm having that, this is a contract breach, I'm not doing teaching. And I would have had to do teaching for sure if I would have stayed. And that was one of the reasons then that I left beyond the fact that obviously [current institution] is a better institution. And here, I'm so impressed, they completely, they completely stick to the contract. So I've never done a single hour of teaching. And everything that I have done, when somebody approached me - which never was my boss, because she's really compliant with the contract - so I've been approached by the [institute], which is like an institute that is close to ours, and they pay me like big times on top of my normal salary for like, teaching, for like an hour. It's crazy overpaid. So that's very impressive here. But I guess also again, like the UK system where you have teaching personnel and research personnel. So when it's split up like that, then I guess it's easier to comply with the rules or with the contract that you lay out. So yeah, very thankful for that here.

##### Researcher

That's good. So you mentioned those hours of hourly paid teaching that you're offered. Do you take that up or do you reject that? Is that something that you've done?

##### Participant 32

So, I've been approached by a few people and those from within the business school itself I took on the first time around, because I thought, oh, yeah, it was teaching assistance, why not? But it was really poorly paid and took so much time. So I would never again do that. Ever since I've been asked again I've rejected it. And I don't think it's a problem because everyone understands that at the career stage I am, I should do only research. But I've been approached again by the [institute], and given that they pay something like 250 bucks an hour, one single hour, and as you can imagine, like, the income as a [role] is rather low. I decided to do it again and it's only like 3 hours or so. It's like for 3 hours engagement, a lot of money, which I need of course. So I'm a bit incentive driven, I guess, haha.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting.

##### Participant 32

Yeah. But, I have taken up, like, what I do is external lectureships here and there for other universities, because I have designed my own course some time ago. And when I can teach that very course in the exact format it is, then I'm happy to do it because that is not much extra work. But it's like a qualification that obviously I do need because you need to have a teaching portfolio and teaching evaluations and things in order to get into a tenure track. So I do teach, but mostly outside of the school, because here everything is, of course, pretty much predefined because they have a certain quality level, which my course might not comply with.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. So you kind of talk about teaching, then, kind of as a bit of a necessity to sort of climb the career ladder in a way, I guess?

##### Participant 32

Yeah. Because the problem is that it's normally, I think if you think of this job as like being key to educate future leaders who then have an influence on the economic system and like, just management practice and things, then yes, that should be a motive. But then if you actually conduct a class and you see that everyone is completely uninvolved, students are just very unfriendly most of the time, and they treat you like a service provider... I had the illusion, like the first few times around, but I don't know, especially in a virtual setting, there is zero appreciation whatsoever. And I guess the shift goes to, do I need that? Yeah, I need it. So I will do it a bit on the side.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. So I guess going back to your kind of research side of things then... obviously, as a [role], you mentioned you're on a very kind of dedicated research contract working on this project. I guess what I want to know is what are the kind of expectations of you in that role in terms of I guess what you're kind of required to achieve? Is it kind of set out like, perhaps outputs are expected of you in terms of perhaps publications or conferences or any other kind of engagement, dissemination, that kind of thing? What are the kind of expectations of you?

##### Participant 32

I think it's pretty much predetermined by the funder of the project. So in [current institution] it's a corporate funder. And they had very clear predetermined wishes of what they want, which is like a practitioner guidebook, so a small booklet. And we are doing that right now. And they had a few additional wishes of things we should do. But leading back to my boss being completely over committed and having zero time whatsoever, she negotiated it down a little bit using the argument of Covid-19. Which I think is fair enough, because due to Covid-19, like now everything is like double speed. So everyone is just completely overworked. So yeah. But it's predefined. And from the [foreign institution] project it was something like... it was a bigger project, it was something like six research papers, of which three could also be a book chapter. And it was in the sphere of [alternative discipline] where everyone just publishes in random book chapters. So it's pretty easy. So overall, it was six people, three papers, which wasn't much.

##### Researcher

Okay. Yeah. That's really interesting. I guess it's quite a unique situation in that it being kind of like a corporate funded project, there is a very kind of clear route to having an actual impact on practitioners, which I guess isn't always the case if you're perhaps research council funded. I want to ask is, that kind of impact side of things, in terms of, like you said, producing that practitioner guidebook, is there any kind of, I guess, expectation from [current institution] to kind of engage in impact activities as part of your role in research in terms of engaging with external stakeholders? Or is that very much driven by the sort of project you're working on and the fact that it's being funded by a corporate entity?

##### Participant 32

Yeah, no, [current institution] doesn't care at all. I think what they cared about in the first place was the grant - and that's it. So all the requirements that we have come from the funder and the main goal is to make them happy. And the expectations they had were already pretty low. But then again, the project was originally meant to last no longer than a year. So the low deliverables, I think, were justified. Yeah, so, it's only to make them happy. [Current institution] doesn't care at all what we are doing. They have the cheque for the grant, and I guess they get some parts of it, I assume.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. And in terms of, I guess, other kind of outputs separate to the kind of impact side - so separate to the practitioner guidebook sort of thing - are you kind of expected to get any kind of academic publications out of this project?

##### Participant 32

No, I'm not. And my boss said in the very beginning, if we do something on the side, that's great. But the main goal is to make the funder happy and the funder wants the guidebook. And then, again, as she's completely over committed, we are not writing something on the side. We have started, but then she just had to jump out because she's too overworked. And now, I'm not working with our data, but when we started off, we took somebody else on board, we had a similar data set, we started with a comparative study, and then my boss left and with her our data set. But I stayed on the project with the other one. So there will be some kind of output that, for myself, I will register as an academic output of this [role], but it's my own choice that I stayed with this other person because I think the data set is extremely interesting, and we can also make an in-depth study instead of a comparative study out of it. So, but there are no expectations from the university or my boss at all. She was rather like, drawing back because she just had so many commitments. And so she has basically a dual position and then a child and it's just too much for her.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. And going back to a little bit earlier, we talked about, you mentioned, you know, as a [role] you would kind of be looking, I guess, in the future to secure a more obviously permanent position somewhere. You mentioned about tenure track and that kind of thing. And you mentioned that teaching is kind of like a necessary thing that you have to do on the side to get into that position. What else do you kind of think that you would need to do or focus on to kind of, I guess, progress in the way that you would like to progress in the future?

##### Participant 32

I actually have an excellent table that I'm shortly going to open now... we can just go through it. So, what I'm doing with priorities that I have is academic output, so research papers. And here I'm always having, this is the rule, having some three papers rolling at a time. So one in an early development stage, one in a writing up stage and one close to submission. So three ongoing projects. I'm having that right now. And then I do something that is not very admired. But this is something that I try to do... because I don't want to, like, in the very beginning I told you I did that because I was scared to be part of an organisation, and I'm in [subject area] so there has to be some kind of, like, greater normative reasoning to why I'm doing this job. So the second thing that I'm doing is practitioner output. Things that have actually an impact. So this guidebook right now counts as one. And then I'm writing teaching cases, I've done it before and I'm doing it again. This is then something also that you can include in your teaching sessions. But it's also like, schools like to see that, because then they see that you're not just doing hardcore research, but it's like a fine line, because I'm going for quite high risk journals with my publications - meaning it takes forever. And if, for now, I mostly have practitioner output out there, so it's like, I'm not entirely sure if this strategy will pay off in the end, but that's how I've set it up. And then I'm doing some teaching and supervision always. So, I'm doing... once a year, so, every second semester, like external lectureships somewhere. So my course that I told you about. And this semester I'm doing the teaching for the [institute] here, which is only 3 hours. So I'm trying to teach not too much because I also don't enjoy it anymore in the virtual settings. Students are just horrible. And then like voluntary engagement... so I'm obviously reviewing and I set myself an amount of how many formal and how many friendly reviews I'm giving per year. And then I'm in the organising committee of a research group, and then I'm engaged in the [professional association]. So these three things... and that's it. So yeah, academic output, practitioner output, teaching, and voluntary engagement are the four things that I'm doing and that I think are complementary. But of course, the focus should be on research, because at the end of the day, honestly, if you have this one AMJ paper, you have a job. Nothing else counts, really.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. So you mentioned there, you used the word strategy, which is really interesting. Because I think some academics really sort of just take it day by day and just think about it on a daily basis that way. Whereas I guess from your perspective and from what you've just told me, it sounds like you really are kind of planning this out and you do have a strategy in mind. Would you say that you generally, even to get to the point where you are now, have you had to, I guess, kind of strategize and prioritise certain things?

##### Participant 32

I'm not sure to be honest. I think, yeah, I don't know. Mainly here I have learned in [current institution] that you have to be super strategic when being in academia and wanting to make it. Beforehand it was more like one thing led to the other. And before, the main thing - and I did not do that on purpose - but I don't know, I was friends, well not friends, but I was having a really good relationship with my PhD supervisor, my second one. And she then connected me with this person, this person connected me with this person. So I think I guess now the combination of those will probably help me to get a job which is being strategic and a networking person. Beforehand I didn't know about the strategic aspect, and I was just really, I guess you would call it like a networking kind of person. I was always like talking to everyone, and was everywhere, and at every kind of conference that you can imagine. And then I had a few superiors that were really pushing me. And I think that made it all much more than any qualification that I had because, maybe you've seen it, but my output is really low right now because I had to write a book in my PhD, so I didn't have any papers whatsoever when I came to [current institution]. And I still only have things under review. So I guess the pipeline will help for a job, but yeah, it's really about networking. It's crazy. Which is a bit sad, because if you're an introvert, a really clever person, you will have lower chances. Except if you have an AMJ already. But if not, then... that's really ridiculous. Because being outgoing is not a qualification, really. But that's something that I've learnt here. You have all these, like, job market sessions and learning how to blah, blah, blah, and so on. All this training where they really push you because they want to produce high level assistant professors, and they require people to go to good schools afterwards. And as I'm a [role], I can join all the things that PhD researchers are having access to and that's where I learnt, I didn't know any of that beforehand.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting, and kind of moving on from that then, you talked about the importance of networking - obviously, you've got your research, you're practitioner focused, these external lectureships. It sounds like you wear a lot of different hats. You have a lot of different kind of responsibilities in different areas. Do you ever find that your workload sort of becomes in a way hard to manage or do you generally feel like you're quite on top of things and you don't really see that ever as kind of an issue? What's your kind of perspective on workload in that sense?

##### Participant 32

I think it's completely out of control, and I'm struggling on a regular basis with being close to burnout. I mean, the whole idea that I had when I was in my undergrad that being in academia will give me all the freedom of the world is complete rubbish, because at the end of the day, you're in a prison and you're like, not actually writing down how much you work. It makes you work 12 to 14 hours a day, and every single weekend, and not taking a single day of holiday per year. And nobody looks out for you. Everyone is so under pressure in this system that everyone just exploits each other. But as I told you from [foreign institution], things roll downhill. I mean, literally, I then kept on further delegating work to the PhD, who then further delegated work to the research assistant. So it's literally like the last person in the chain, until the last person in the chain, everyone was under pressure and everyone was completely overworked. So I think it's completely out of control on a daily basis. I'm starting to reconsider if I want to do this job... because I actually would like to survive. And this is really hard. I find it really, really hard. So yeah, not a great work life balance. And to be fair, this is not [current institution] because everyone always is like, "yeah, do you have to work hard at [current institution]?" And yes, you have to, but it's every other university as well. It's a system which exploits people until they are basically unable to work. And I know so many people that have burnout, it is so messed up. Not great.

##### Researcher

No, but I really appreciate your honesty. It's really good to hear kind of honest accounts of the kind of experience. And it's a shame that this is kind of the experience you've had. But I guess on that note, we're at the end of the meeting slot, so I obviously don't want to keep you any longer than I have.

##### Participant 32

Do you have any major last questions that you want to pose or do you feel like you got through it all more or less?

##### Researcher

Generally, we have got through everything I kind of want to talk about. It's been very efficient. And I've got loads of notes, which is good. I guess one kind of final question that I would maybe want to ask is, it sounds like you're quite strategic in the way that you're planning your future career. But then I guess there's another element to the strategy of being an academic, a strategy for actually managing the kind of workload of the day to day, different pressures... how are you managing that? You said you feel like you might be on the verge of burnout and you feel quite overworked, how do you sort of manage that on a day to day basis?

##### Participant 32

I make very concrete week and sometimes even day plans. You have to read up on it, I'm sure there are some studies which show how many academics are actually having OCD, like this disease where you have to order and organise everything in detail. I'm certainly having OCD I think. So yeah, I make very concrete plans and then prioritise things actually in the order that I told you... research first, practitioner outcomes second, teaching third, voluntary fourth. And everything that I don't manage, I will have to say no. And I've not done that before and just overworked into the night and on the weekends. And now I'm like back at the point where I was so tired that I decided that I have to cut off at, like, six in the evening, as every other person does as well who is not in academia, and everything that I don't manage until six, well, things happen. Then I'm not managing it. I will see, I don't know how far I will get with this strategy, but this is like, my survival mode where I feel like, okay, my life is actually more important than becoming a top tier professor. Maybe then it doesn't work out, and that's okay as well.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. I really appreciate that. That was everything I wanted to ask. So I'm happy to let you go now and not take up any more of your time. But I do really appreciate your honesty and your time talking to me. It's been very useful, and I've got a whole big page of notes, so that's always a good sign of interview. So thank you very much.

##### Participant 32

Yeah, I would be interested in your study results of course, so if you want to share them, I'd be happy to have a look.

##### Researcher

Definitely. That would be really good. Hopefully in the not too distant future, I'll have something to share with you. I'll make a note of that.

##### Participant 32

Yeah. And don't stress yourself. Honestly, it's honestly not worth it. And anyways, if you're good enough, you will make it. And if it takes you a bit longer, so what, just enjoy it and take your time.

##### Researcher

Absolutely. Thank you very much for that. And yeah, I guess best of luck with everything.

##### Participant 32

Alright. Thanks so much.

##### Researcher

Okay. Have a nice rest of the day. Bye.

##### Participant 32

Bye.