##### Researcher

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

##### Participant 50

Sure. I am a [social scientist] by training. I did my PhD at [PhD institution], but I was between the [business school] and [social science department], so still like a foot in [social science]. And then I did a postdoc in [foreign country] and came back to start my position at [previous institution], where I stayed for one year and a half. And then I got a [research council] grant and I went to [current institution] and I've been there since 2016. And I got promoted last year. So I'm now [role]. So this year, to be honest, the last six months I was on maternity leave. I've just come back to work. So I might have a sort of a detached perspective, given Covid-19, actually. So I haven't stepped in the office since March last year and then I didn't teach this year and I've had very little interaction. So maybe that also matters for what I'm going to say.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Yeah, definitely. The context of people's working lives is really important and helps, I guess, with me comparing different people and stuff. So that's really useful information. Thank you. You said you're a [social scientist] by trade, so I'm assuming that sort of pre PhD, you were more sort of social science based in terms of your studies? So what was it that sort of, I guess, inspired you to make the jump into more of a business domain? And did you kind of envisage that you would end up in a business school eventually?

##### Participant 50

Basically, so what happened is I studied [subject]. It's a very different discipline. I did my master's, which is two years in Europe, in [foreign country]. Then I started working on a project which was on [topic], and I really liked it in [foreign country], so you could choose a lot of elective modules. So I chose everything in [subject] as much as I could. Through that, I met my PhD supervisor who asked me to apply to [PhD institution]. So she was in the business school, she's an American and I kept a supervisor in the [social sciences] department, but then I found myself in the management department and I really hated it. I really didn't like being in a management department. And I attended all the seminars for my training - which were not compulsory at the time, now I think it's compulsory - I attended them at the [social sciences] department, actually. I had much more in common with those PhD students. And then, yeah, I remember that my supervisor kept telling me, you need to decide whether you're a [social scientist] or a business school person because it matters for the publications, et cetera. And I didn't really understand, I think, at the time, that it would have had such big implications. And I just published more or less where my supervisor published and where my other mentors published. So, which are all journals in between. So not the top management journals but more like the top [management sub-discipline] journals and some [social sciences] journals. And then I ended up in a business school. Partly for the publications, but mainly because there were more jobs. I would say that I am a [social scientist] and I applied to some [social sciences] department, but [social sciences] departments are not interested anymore in [research area] and there were very few jobs at the end. My postdoc was at [research centre]. So it was a [social science] place. But then in the UK I ended up in business schools or schools of management.

##### Researcher

And you say that when you were doing your PhD, you hated the management department. Why was that the case?

##### Participant 50

The first day of the PhD workshops, the guy who was teaching it said that my field was a dying field. [PhD institution] was very famous for [management sub-discipline]. And at the time I started in 2010, it was quite recent that the [management sub-discipline] department had become part of the management department and some important professors left because they retired. And it was a time when [PhD institution] started hiring a lot of Americans doing [another management sub-discipline]. So they obviously really wanted to push that side of things. And so they were sending clear messages that what I was doing was not what they were doing. And the conferences that I wanted to go to are not the right conferences because I had to go to the Academy of Management. And so I fought a lot in the management department. I was a student rep. Yeah, I'm not afraid of speaking up and I think that was useful to feel more welcome in the sense that I could sort of shape the environment a bit. And then to be honest, I ended up having the best job of all their PhD students. So yes, they congratulated me in the end.

##### Researcher

That's interesting. So that was [PhD institution]. I'd be interested to know how does... well, actually I'd be interested to know how did [previous institution] compare and also your current institution. How does that kind of compare? Do you have those same kind of strong feelings for either of those institutions, or were they more kind of welcoming and more appreciative of your kind of discipline?

##### Participant 50

I thought [previous institution] was amazing in that respect. It was a really nice environment, wonderful colleagues. We all had the same understanding of the discipline. We all had the same scepticism in regard to rankings. It was really, like in terms of environment, it was absolutely the best. There were also, like, really good academics there as well, doing my stuff. So I really enjoyed that. It was very supportive, like, super nice. But it was far away. I didn't want to live in [area] and there was a lot of teaching, much more than at [current institution]. It was also expensive because the more teaching you have, the more often you have to go. And so I didn't leave because of my colleagues or because of pressures. It was just like a very pragmatic decision. At [current institution], when I joined, there were a lot of people like those at [previous institution] and they left one year after I joined. At [current institution] it's maybe a bit special compared to the other business schools, because it grew a lot. So it's very recent. They grew massively. So it's a very different place from the place I had joined at the time.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. And you mentioned, obviously you have less teaching load than you did at [previous institution]. Was it kind of, I guess the more research side of things that attracted you to an academic career as opposed to kind of teaching? Is that where your kind of passion lies, in the research or perhaps somewhere else?

##### Participant 50

Yeah, absolutely. So I'm more interested in research. I like teaching, and teaching is fun when the students are also good. But some students, especially in the master's programmes, they were not very good.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. So in terms of your responsibilities at the moment, obviously you said that you don't have as much teaching. What does the kind of breakdown of your work look like? Is it like an even split between research and admin? Do you have any sort of major admin roles? Do you spend most of your time doing research? What does that kind of look like for you?

##### Participant 50

It recently changed because I've just been given a big admin role. I am an undergraduate programme director, so this means that I will have less teaching. Usually at [current institution] we have, it's more or less like 100 hours of teaching, not considering marking or the size of the course or anything. It's just 100 hours of teaching. And then if you have an admin role or a grant or whatever, they discount some hours of teaching. And I've always had some sort of administrative role or at the beginning when I joined, I had a grant, so I taught only 20 hours for two years. And also I just won another grant. So I will also teach less than 100 hours. I will probably teach only 50 because I also have this admin role. So generally I would say at [current institution] I do research much more than teaching. Also because I have my teaching concentrated in one term, which is something at [current institution] they tend to do, or you are more able to ask for these things. I don't have to interact with students too much during the other time, which is good for research.

##### Researcher

Okay. And that admin role. So you said you were sort of given the admin role. Is that something that you were actively seeking and wanted to do, or was it kind of like a necessary thing where you thought you needed to kind of do something? How did that sort of play out, the decision to take on quite a big admin role, as you described it?

##### Participant 50

Yeah. So basically I wanted a bigger admin role. I didn't want the biggest role and they offered, they didn't really offer, it was sort of an offer, but like, yeah, it's a bit strange how these things work, but it's more like, they said that it was a great opportunity. And they said that it would be important for promotion and this thing was reiterated also with my mentor. So they really wanted me to take this role. And it was right before I went on maternity leave. So I think I would have said yes without any problem if I hadn't been pregnant. I just thought, okay, right after maternity leave is not the best to start with a big admin role. But then at the end I took it. And I think especially given the fact that we can do stuff online, this role is probably more flexible than teaching. And it has more certainty in terms of planning, given that we have absolutely no idea whether we are going to be teaching online or in person. At least like an admin role, you can plan around it because you have certain meetings and they almost certainly will be online. So I was quite happy with that.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. And in terms of, I guess the different streams of your jobs, obviously, research, teaching, admin, what are the kind of expectations placed upon you as an academic in terms of what I guess you're kind of expected to achieve in a given time period? I guess in terms of outputs, evaluations, performance, development, that kind of thing, what are the kind of expectations of you?

##### Participant 50

I think for promotion, I have actually promotion criteria here. First of all, I need to have a big admin role. Check. Then I need to have supervised PhD students. I need to publish. I think it's more like, you need to have published even before your promotion. You need to have something like 15 publications. And in the last year, last few years, from the last time you got promoted, you need to probably have three or four. But it depends really on the quality of the publications. So if you have ten three stars, you will never get reader, become a reader. If you have probably like one four star, then probably that's enough. It's absolutely ridiculous but this is how things are. And then I think, luckily we don't need to have a grant, but we need to provide evidence that we have applied for grants. Obviously at the end of the day you need to have a grant. I think it's one of those things, they expect you to bring some income. And now there is also this impact assessment. So you need also to show that you have engaged with the wider public, et cetera. Luckily they don't ask you to provide evidence that you have actually had an impact because that would be ridiculous. So, just looking at the criteria. So you need to show demonstrable progress in publication of research papers since your last appointment. So there is not a number of publications that I need to have. But I think it's quite clear what you need to have. But I think, well, and then obviously like teaching and convening courses and there is also this, I don't know how it is in other business schools, but we also have like, a big part is also esteem. So whether you have been called being asked to be the keynote speaker somewhere, whether you have been asked to be the external examiner in a PhD viva, and to be honest, all these things are really good for me because I need external validation because I don't get any within the school. Unless I bring money. But my publications are not interesting to them, really. So I think external validation from people in my discipline outside the business school is actually quite important to me, to signal that I actually do good research, it's just that it's not in the field most of my colleagues are in.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. So you sort of touched on the ABS list as well in terms of ranking, needing a four star versus three star papers and that kind of thing. From your own perspective and your own experiences in this environment, why do you think those metrics have become so important and why are they sort of the anchor for good quality outputs which your progression is essentially being based on? Why do you think that is the case? Do you think it's just something that has become embedded in the culture and it's hard to really find out why? Or do you have a sort of gut instinct of why that might be the case?

##### Participant 50

Well, I think partly it's a purely British obsession of measuring performance, sort of a new public management kind of thing. And I think research is really difficult to quantify. The academics who developed this list just provided an instrument which then could be easily used by management to do what they wanted to do. Anyways, I think probably this is what happens and maybe not. Maybe, but I would say the ABS list can be used by certain people in the business school, not only management, but also academic colleagues to push their own discipline forward and like to become more important. It is an instrument that is used also by academics against other academics and not only by management against employees.

##### Researcher

That's very interesting. Thank you.

##### Participant 50

From what I can see from meetings, it can be really useful for some people.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Obviously, you mentioned that for your progression, there's all this emphasis on kind of research publication outputs. In that sense, do you think as much kind of consideration is given to the success in other areas, like you mentioned, teaching and impact, or do you feel like they might be secondary? How do you think they kind of come into the equation?

##### Participant 50

Formally, we need to prove excellence in two out of three areas. The three areas are admin, teaching and research.

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 50

You could choose, you can prove excellence in two. So research and admin, that is like very good research and a big admin role. So if you were only like an excellent researcher, theoretically this is the case, if you're an excellent researcher but you haven't had that big of an admin role, you're not going to be promoted. Well, teaching is probably less important, but that's because we have an academic education path. For those colleagues, teaching obviously is more important. And there are a lot of issues with those contracts and it's very problematic to have a promotion based on teaching. And they also need to do research on pedagogic issues rather than their own research. But yes, I would say obviously publications and grants are the most important thing. I would say, yeah. To be honest, they are also the most difficult things. You can do a big admin role if you're offered an admin role, you just do it. So it's just a matter of time, it's not a matter of not being able to do it. With publications there is so much which is beyond your control. It's luck, very often, but also you have to collect the data. So you need to get access to the data. As you know very well. It's much more complicated. It just takes way more time than an admin role or whatever teaching innovation you want to introduce. I think it's quite fair that publications are considered as more important. And that's probably also the reason why I am very sceptical about the introduction of a teaching pathway where you don't require academics to do research and in many cases they actually want to. So I think you set the expectations wrong because academics are about research and teaching. So you cannot be an academic if you are only teaching. Definitely research is very important. I don't agree with the criteria that they have to evaluate the importance of research, but I do agree that research is more important than any other areas.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. I'd be interested to hear your perspective on the relationship between kind of research and impact in that, so obviously, you've laid out kind of the expectations of you as an academic, which includes research publications and impact. Do you feel like they're two complementary activities? Do you think it is easy to achieve both? Is it easy to publish in four star journals, but also engage with external stakeholders, or do you feel like you kind of have to make a trade off? How does that work in practice? How does that kind of work, do you think?

##### Participant 50

For me, it's not even a matter of a trade off between a four star journal and engaging with stakeholders, because it's just a matter of the topic you choose and if you find something that the stakeholders want to hear, then you'll probably have an impact because they want you to do it anyway. Otherwise you won't. I think, in fact, it's really problematic for critical research. Critical research has no chance to have an impact because stakeholders are not interested in acting upon the results of such research that may go against powerful stakeholders like the state or the government, political parties, management, whatever. I mean, I don't think there is really a trade off because I could imagine if an organisation provides access to data and then you find something which is useful for the organisation, and you had very good data because you got the access, you'll publish a very good paper and the organisation is going to change their practices because you found what they wanted, or because they were genuinely interested in finding a solution to the problem they asked you to do research on. So you would have a great publication and also impact. But the problem is that if you had found something like, for example, what I usually find is that [group] should be more listened to. How high are my chances that the managers would say, oh, why didn't I think about that? Let me bargain with [group] a bit better. So that's not going to happen. So I don't have impact, and obviously access is really difficult as well. So that's my main issue with impact.

##### Researcher

And in terms of obviously the way impact is measured or kind of, I guess, viewed by the business school. I mean, do you personally feel like there are other ways of doing impact that isn't necessarily through research, impact through teaching and things like that? Do you feel like those are things that are valuable, and if so, do you think that they kind of are adequately measured or given consideration by the business school?

##### Participant 50

I think my main impact is through teaching. So this is how I understand my impact. And this is, when I do my research, I always tell my interview participants that this is important for my teaching. And I think it really is because I'm mostly a qualitative researcher and students really like my stories because everything becomes so much more alive for them. And I teach first year undergrads a [social science] course. And I think most of the things I say they never thought about because of the families they come from and because of the also the education that they have. Because in the UK you can choose a lot of courses. Most of them have taken economics, but they have never taken [social science]. So we talk about inequality and discrimination and managerial control. And they never thought about those topics in a critical way. So I think this is really important and I always thought that is something that will stay with them and maybe when they start their job they will think, oh, we talked about this situation in my first year course, this is what happened. When we talk about, even stupid things, even like the role of Christmas parties, why we have Christmas parties in the office. So is it because the manager or the employer wants to be really fun? Or is there another reason? Yeah, for them, I hope this is my impact. And I think students remember me and still come to talk to me when I meet them after the first year, and they seem to enjoy it. So I hope this is my impact, but it's really difficult to measure, obviously, and it doesn't really matter. And I think to some extent it's fine because I wouldn't know how to operationalize it, and I wouldn't say that my course is more important than other courses or how I teach is better than how other people teach. So I think we all have a role in the business school, and if we just stop trying to measure everything we do... academics are quite self driven, so I think we would all do a good job anyway. Definitely. I know that I would do a very good job anyway, that many of my colleagues will, even if the manager wouldn't try to measure us every time we do something, that's the main thing.

##### Researcher

Yeah, that's really interesting. Thank you. And in terms of different hats, you have to be a teacher one day, researcher the next, administrator, perhaps a manager or whatever, the next. It's a lot of different things going on. How do you generally sort of find your workload, do you find it to be manageable in most cases? Do you ever feel like you're maybe given too much work or the workload allocation model isn't totally reflective of the amount of time you have to spend on things, or is it accurate? Do you feel like generally the workload that is given to you is appropriate? How do you sort of make sense of that?

##### Participant 50

I think it would be way more manageable if there weren't such high expectations on research. And I think I would enjoy everything else much more if I didn't know that everything else I do, apart from the publications, is just a waste of time to some extent. I feel that my teaching is manageable, but I feel marking is not manageable and our workload model does not account for marking. So if I teach an undergrad course with 400 students or if I teach a master's course with 20, on the workload model it counts the same. But then obviously with first year undergrads, you get emails all the time, and also they do write two different pieces of work and we are just a team of three. Sometimes we get one more person for the marking, but that's it. So basically I mark around 200 pieces of work - all the same, by the way, because they tend to answer all the same questions, even though I give them quite a few. And I feel that is a waste of my time and I feel that this is unfair. Now they are changing it and I think it will be a bit better. But so far this is how it has been. And so you want teaching to be over, and for us it went on until the end of May because of all the marking. So for us as a team, it's annoying then to be able to start doing research only in June. It's late.

##### Researcher

Do you think in any way the pandemic has perhaps worsened that situation or had any effect on it whatsoever? Obviously, obviously you've been on maternity leave.

##### Participant 50

Yeah, I have no idea.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Okay. That's interesting. No, that's fine. That's good to know. So in terms of, I guess the next steps for you in your kind of career, what are your kind of future ambitions in terms of the sort of, I guess mid term and also, I guess longer term, do you see yourself staying where you are? Are you interested in moving up the ranks of the academic career? And I would also be interested to know what kind of, I guess, strategy do you have personally, if you have one at all, for kind of achieving that? Are you expecting to prioritise certain aspects over others? Are you thinking you might need to move institutions? How are you sort of navigating that?

##### Participant 50

I think I will apply for a promotion, I think soon definitely. I don't think I would necessarily work in a different... I would be happy not to work in a business school. I'm not sure that I would want to work in a [social science] department in the UK because they are very quantitative. They do very different stuff. But if I found like the perfect job in a department which is not the business school without getting a pay cut, then I think I would apply. I absolutely would apply. Not necessarily in the UK, because I think in the UK, business schools are annoying. But now I know what I need to do unless there is a big change. So, for example, we will change the dean at some point. That could be a big change. I think it took me such a long time to understand what I needed to do in the business school. I think I would stay for a bit longer unless I really have the golden opportunity somewhere else. Yeah.

##### Researcher

Okay.

##### Participant 50

So I definitely would prioritise research, as you probably have understood. So I'm on sabbatical next year and I have this grant as well. So hopefully I will have more time to do research despite having a small baby.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. In terms of my actual kind of questioning, I think I've covered all the areas I wanted to talk about, so I'm happy to sort of let you go and stuff. Unless there's anything off the top of your head you can think of that might be useful or relevant to this kind of area of business schools and stuff that you haven't had a chance to talk about or you think I haven't asked about?

##### Participant 50

No, I think we talked pretty much about everything. No, that's perfect. And I have to go anyway, so it's fine. I think actually I said pretty much everything I would want to say about business schools. But if you need any clarification or anything, you can just drop me an email and I'm more than happy to reply via email.

##### Researcher

Absolutely. Thank you very much for that. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

##### Participant 50

Thank you. It's good to have time to reflect upon stuff, definitely.

##### Researcher

I hope you found it useful to just even chat about your experiences. And I've really enjoyed hearing about your working life. And thank you very much for your honesty and being open and frank with me. I really appreciate that. I will let you go and get on with the rest of your day. But yeah, it's been really lovely to meet you and thank you for your time. And best of luck with everything.

##### Participant 50

Have a good evening. Bye.