##### Researcher

Okay, so obviously I've had a look at your profile and stuff. So I know a little bit about you in terms of your research area and your kind of background, but just in your own words, could you tell me a bit about yourself in terms of your background, career and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 55

So I've not always been an academic. I had a career in industry for around 15 years actually, before I became an academic. So I worked in [role] for a company called [company] that went spectacularly bust. And while I was there, they were very good at supporting us in training, and I got it into my head at one point that I wanted to be a project manager. And they didn't seem to let me be a project manager, but I found a part time MSc at [PhD institution]. They sponsored me to go on the part time MSc and it was really interesting because when I went on the MSc, my boss then at that time said, look, I don't want you to be a project manager. He said, anybody can be a project manager. You could head up one of our groups. He said, what you've got to do is move around the different... so I've worked through quite a number of different departments. But while I was on the MSc course, I found that I loved [management sub-discipline]. And around the same time, it was all very strange in a way, but I was also pregnant. I went on maternity leave and while I was on maternity leave, all I had to do was write my dissertation for my MSc. And also at the same time the company went bust. I collected some of the data, I think, because I was doing it around some of the things that we did in, in the business. And they went bust and I lost my job, which wasn't really the best of times because... it's strange, when you've had a child, I think everything changes in your world anyway. And to find that you've lost your job that you put your heart and soul into was really difficult and it took me quite a while... I was very good at getting interviews and then not very good at getting jobs. And I saw an advert for a job at [another university]. And I asked my supervisor at the time, my MSc supervisor at that time, if he'd write me a reference. And he said to me, oh, if you want to be an academic, you need to come talk to me first. So I went in and saw him. Probably baby with me as well. I used to take the baby with me and I'd leave the pram with the porters and take the baby up in the lift. And at those days, profs had secretaries and the secretary used to nurse the baby whilst I talked to the prof, haha. And he said to me, right, if you want to be an academic, you need to understand how different it is to business. All the things are very different in terms of, the hierarchies are different and the expectations in many ways are different, and it's a totally different way of working. And he said, anyway, if you want to do that, don't go there because they'll probably give you a job straight away now, but all you'll ever do is teach, you won't get to do any research. So if you want to be an academic, you need to do a PhD. And he said I'd love you to do a PhD with me, but you can't do one this year, so you have to wait for a year. So that was the start of the academic journey. And I got offered a part time job at the business school, doing a one year project, so I thought, well, that's perfect. It worked really well. So I went to the business school and worked part time. I loved research, I've always been inquisitive, I think, nosey. You have to be nosey to be a researcher. So that was it. So I then did my PhD in [area]. So I was very lucky in that, we messed about a bit in terms of whether I was full time or part time as a PhD... started full time actually, because my supervisor got a [grant] for [topic]. We started working on that and after a year it actually became clear that it was really difficult to do anything novel with the material in terms of it being a PhD. So at that time, it would still have been a lot of change in [public body], and so I looked at [area related to public body]. That's what I did my PhD in, and it took me four years, I think, in the end. And then towards the end of my PhD journey, they gave me a six month teaching contract. And then a job came up, which I applied for. I was fortunately successful. So, I've basically stayed in the same place all the time. Perhaps I'm lazy, not sure, haha. Just moved through the ranks here. And I'm now [role].

##### Researcher

It's really sort of interesting that you have stayed at the same place because I think in academia you do see a lot of kind of shifting around. I know sometimes academics need to, have to kind of move horizontally and then up, if you know what I mean. If they want to move up to SL, they might have to go somewhere else. So I'm assuming for you it was obviously not because you stayed?

##### Participant 55

Yeah. It's much harder to get promoted internally than it is externally. Part of it is also circumstance sometimes. I think it'd be interesting, I don't know from your data, but it would be interesting to see whether it's male academics that are more mobile than female academics. Because I was in a situation, my husband is an engineer, he was always in a job where he had to work away. And one of you, you need somebody to be at home for the child. We hadn't got family nearby, so we didn't have somebody that backed us up. So it wasn't feasible for both of us to be doing long commutes or anything. So for me I would have been, I suppose there are places I could have gone to [other nearby institutions]. They did once ask me about a job in [nearby institution], but it's a bit of a killer commute from here. On a good day in the car, it'll be an hour. On a bad day it could be 4 hours. And if you've got child care in the mix, I just don't think, I couldn't have done it. It was too difficult. It was, I suppose, the easy choice to be here. I guess I was lucky, I got promoted internally. So, the step to [current role] is the harder one. I was lucky in the way that certain things worked out. One of the things that I've been very successful in is knowledge transfer partnerships, so they count very much in terms of research income. So typically in engineering and science, there's high expectations about grants that you bring in. It's very hard in a business school quite often to bring grants in, but I've been successful in that. So I think that in terms of the money, in terms of the four things that you have to do, the admin, the teaching, the engagement and then the research... so the engagement side of my CV was naturally strong and I just love doing KTPs. It's just nice to stay involved with industry and in contact with what they're doing. So I got involved with those from very early on, when I was still probably on probation and likewise, admin, I can do admin standing on my head. And I've done a lot of admin, so things that we wouldn't allow now, I was a programme director while I was on probation, which nowadays we wouldn't let somebody do that because it's not fair in terms of what they're doing. I've done a lot of programme directing. So we've got a strange setup in the way that the school works. We have four divisions and each division has a head of division and then they have an associate head for teaching and an associate head for research, and then an associate head for social responsibility now as well. And I'd been associate head for teaching for quite a number of years. I think I did it for about five years or maybe six years. I've also been [senior role] for longer than I care to mention, but it's just all admin stuff. It's frustrating and boring and time consuming. And I've also been an associate dean for teaching and learning in the faculty, which was a nice job, and I did that because... so when I went for promotion to [previous role], I just got it. When I went for promotion to [current role], I didn't get it. In some senses, it was a mix up. My case hadn't been put properly, because I went to the feedback and I was expecting them to turn me down on research papers, which I could have coped with. And it was bizarre, the feedback, because the feedback was, I'd got some papers accepted, we need to see those published. And you're thinking, well, there's no difference between an acceptance and a published, is there? And you haven't done any admin, or much admin, you've only just started this admin job. And I looked at him and I went, what? I said, I could have understood if you'd thrown me out on anything else, but not the admin. I've been a programme director and I've done a lot of work on personal tutoring and I've done all these things. I was really upset. But anyway, two days later, I was at a teaching thing for the faculty, and one of the people from the faculty came over to me and said, we're still looking for an assistant associate dean, are you interested? And I was so cross I went, yes! But it was really good because it made me understand the university and the faculty much more than I ever would have understood otherwise. So a lot about the challenges of managing teaching at huge universities. We are a huge university, very diverse and very big and lots of different expectations.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. So, yeah, in terms of, I am really interested in the KTP side of things. Do you think it sort of is partly due to kind of your industry experience that you're kind of naturally more inclined to have that kind of engagement focus?

##### Participant 55

I think so. I got involved by accident in my first one, because somebody left. And whoever was in charge, I think they just thought because I've had that experience, it made a difference. And the thing that I found really difficult, because most of mine have been very successful, but if you ask me why, I don't really know. It's not as though I could say, well, I go and do this, and I go and do that. I think one of the things that can happen is if people have always been in academia, I think that they think that they know best, and it's not about knowing things best. It's about knowing things differently, and it's about being patient, and it's about understanding that just because you've got a title that says you're a professor, it doesn't really mean very much. It means that you, it means, it means a lot in some ways, but it doesn't mean that you can go and dictate. And I understand that, maybe that's why I've done them. It just so happened, because I was teaching with [academics from another discipline], they had a lot of contacts on projects. They just kept on saying, well do this one, and it just followed. They just went year on year on year. And I've enjoyed being able to step outside. So I have really enjoyed being able to step out and go back into that world outside. It's only for a couple of hours a week. But to see, you can see things change. When they go well, it's amazing because you sort of see light bulb moments where you actually manage to put something in place. I suppose in lots of ways it's like a long ongoing consultancy. But if it works well, so in all my projects, the associate has been offered a full time job in the company afterwards. So you see your associates grow and you see the companies learn to do new things. For me that's really exciting. Interestingly, so when I started doing them, we didn't have the impact pressure that we have now. So the impact pressure has become very large and impact in management is very difficult to actually articulate quantitatively. But one of the things that the KTPS do, is that you do have to articulate the success from having the project, so you can see changes. But if I'm in science and I've just invented the, if I was the one who invented the Covid-19 vaccine, that is just so easy to see. And in management it's much harder. And I've just been, I suppose, lucky to be in the right place at the right time and you get a bit of a reputation for being able to do them and being successful. And so it sort of snowballs, and I just enjoy doing them. I'm doing one at the moment, I've got another one we're going to write a bid for next week, and it's nice. It's been really hard doing the one we've been doing in Covid-19. So yeah, I think it's interesting. Somebody said to me once when I was going forward for promotion, I've got a much more level application than lots of people would have. So I've not got millions of four star papers, but I've got a reasonable number of papers. Not so many in the last couple of years actually, the last couple of years have been a bit difficult. I'm blaming Covid-19 for that.

##### Researcher

Yeah. I mean, I was going to ask because you mentioned the kind of impact pressure has become kind of elevated. I was going to say, obviously being at [current institution] since [year], you would have seen the kind of movement from the RAE to the REF. Did you kind of see a change in the culture of the business school from that and the way impact was viewed?

##### Participant 55

Oh, so there's been a massive change. The biggest emphasis we have is actually still focusing on papers, which I'm not sure is actually the best way of thinking about it. And they're going to have to refocus for the next one because the biggest change has been that an absolute expectation now is that you have four star or four level publications and there's a huge amount of pressure for that. But the problem with it all is it's so subjective. I'm glad that I'm getting close to retirement because it is so difficult and you can have, I don't know if other people have talked about this, but we do our own internal REF reading. And in the internal REF reading there's a lot of material that goes down. And I think in our last REF the school did not do as well as they hoped to and it looks as though a lot of our stuff had been downgraded and they're now paranoid about it, is the only way I can say it. But of course some of it is led by, particularly because we've got a big science and engineering department, one of the things that they judge your papers on is the size of your data set. So anybody who does qualitative research, that is a struggle because they don't see the value in qualitative research because they argue you can't generalise it. And I get very cross about that because I don't think you can generalise businesses. I don't think there are two firms that do things exactly the same. All firms are very different. So you can't necessarily generalise everything. You need to understand things and understand how things change. And the more and more research we do around management, it's harder and harder to find new things. In science there's still a lot of things that they're still struggling to understand. It's a very difficult thing. So we can see in the school that the emphasis on impact was much higher. And because I'm involved in the KTPs, I suppose I've automatically got that impact and I've not thought about it that much, but I've seen colleagues spend hours and hours and hours on dissemination and public dissemination and putting huge effort in and then to find that they're not counted as having the strongest case to go towards the REF. We're not particularly rewarded or punished for it, but it's really sad to see people put so much effort in and then it not go forward. And I thought, I didn't really take it very seriously at one point and I've realised that you have to take it seriously and put a bit of effort in. But it's not the same as... I've got one colleague who's done enormous amounts of webinars and public dissemination, but it's, because it's so difficult to measure that makes it hard.

##### Researcher

And so obviously earlier on you mentioned the kind of four strands of the job, you've got your admin, your teaching, research, engagement. The way that I perceive you is that you are a particularly, I guess, well rounded academic and that you kind of, you seem to be doing well in all kind of four areas. I'm wondering, throughout your career, throughout moving up the ranks within the institution, what historically has been the most kind of important thing or things or elements of the job that you've had to kind of perhaps prioritise? Or has it really kind of just been an even playing field and that you kind of just do everything in every area and see what happens? I'm interested to know your kind of experience.

##### Participant 55

So, the thing that is my weakness is, sort of a combined weakness, the thing that matters - if my head of school heard me say this she'd be annoyed - but what I care about most are the students in the school. And now I'm [senior role] the people that work for me. So when push comes to shove, that is what I'm going to prioritise because I'm bit of a rebel in many ways. I'm probably one of the most compliant employees they have. But that's a line that nobody's ever pushed me to, you know? So I'm not the best teacher. I was having a discussion with our undergraduate chair just this morning and she would say that it's not just about that, standing up in class, it's about the effort you put in. And I do put, most of the time, I put a lot of effort in. The thing that is hard is the research. So it's having the time. I've been thinking about it, not because I was going to talk to you, but just thinking about it in general in terms of... we've exploited the data we've got, there's not a word left that we can use to do something new. And I really need a good big new data set. And we've been working on, this is embarrassing, the people that I work with, we've been working on some quantitative, a questionnaire which isn't my... I don't like quantitative work at all very much, but we've had in mind doing this questionnaire, and I think we've been working on it for four years. Because all of us, there's four of us that work closely together, but they also have big admin roles... and once you're in those sorts of roles, it's impossible. And some of us were really complaining. So all I did last summer was I planned and re-planned and re-planned and put in plans for backups, for backups, for backups, for what might happen because we didn't know what we we're doing. And it sounds, you think, why does that take so long? Because it's just, you've just finalised it and then they want another plan, or what if we do it like this? And, and it just takes, things like that take so long. So the research is probably the thing, the research is the thing that I always squeeze, and then you end up binge writing and binge writing isn't a good way to do it. And I've survived by networks. And also it's interesting, when I got promoted to [role], one of the things that was commented about my CV, if you looked at all the papers, I was actually the most senior person on papers. So my papers were all with people that were maybe PhD students, we weren't working for a prof. We did it on our own. And so I think that got me credit in terms of where I stood in terms of the papers. So when we started together, I think I was a [role] and the others weren't, and we had a deal that I was never first author. And I've kept to that in that I tend not to be first author now. Because while they're looking to develop their careers, I'm not going to lose anything by not being it. But it's been the research that's been pinched, it's been absolutely squeezed. And we were very lucky because another collaborator gave us their data set. So, there was data, and I've got one paper to write this summer out of that. But then we've got to go for something bigger. But if you can have... it's a team where you can work well together and you can get some, I suppose, where you can actually work together to make something better. We always did, we used to like to do it side by side, but we've had to learn to do it virtually. Now we can sit with a paper on the screen and work through it together. You can leave Zoom on or Teams open so that you can actually just pull somebody up, and you go away and work on this bit... so this teamwork has been really helpful.

##### Researcher

And that sort of squeeze on the research time you're talking about, is that sort of a direct result of the pandemic?

##### Participant 55

It's always been the same. It's always been... if I had a magic wand, which I haven't got... our workload model is broken. Because it underestimates the time you've got for teaching. And certainly do good teaching in which you can actually give constructive feedback, because if all you're going to do is talk to a class for 20 hours a term or whatever it is and not give them any idea of whether they've understood what you've said or not, or give yourself any idea of whether you're making sense and that they understand it... it's pointless. Without somebody giving you feedback, how do you know whether you've got it right or wrong? Okay, possibly it works in some science subjects because it is either right or wrong. So it does work in science. You either can learn and name all the bones in the body or all the arteries, or you can't. But in management, it's not like that. There's something about, you need frameworks, that's why I fell in love with [management sub-discipline] when I was doing my master's. You need frameworks because, I was actually trained as a scientist. I did a strange degree which doesn't exist anymore. And it was called [degree]. It was really interesting. But in management it's about having a framework, I suppose... it just doesn't answer all the questions. So it's much harder. It's not just learning by rote and if you're not just learning by rote, how do you know whether you've written the right thing or not? So the workload model is skewed away from teaching. It doesn't allow you enough time for teaching. So you can put a lot more effort into your teaching. I don't think it was a mistake. Well, it was mistake in one sense because it really effected me, but when we knew we were going online, we had a course that was 100% coursework and we thought the students would love it because it's an essay. And then we realised it's a master's level course and more than half of the course had never written an essay. So they freaked out. Even though we gave them, they could submit a plan, a formative plan and stuff, they still freaked, they found it too difficult. So we changed it last year before Christmas, it was going to be, we were a bit vague about what we said, it was 60% and then four lots of 10% that they were going to get, and we were talking about... we decided we'd do two lots of multiple choice questions and two reflective pieces. Very short ones. Because of the way things panned out, I had to take a second course as well. So I ended up by the end of February, when all our marking had to be finished, I had marked 751 things the last semester. I mean, some of them were only 225 words long, but to some extent it's still the time of getting in it. It's just so hard and so time consuming. I realised that in online circumstances, multiple choice tests are wasted time because people can look the answers up too quickly. So, it's just the research that has been squeezed. And I think probably, through the KTPs and being with the KTPs, you can be a bit on the leading edge with things. If you've got something that's novel, you can get a good three star out of it, and hopefully be okay. I don't know what it is going to be like going forward. It's just changed so much, the main influence at our place has been on getting the level of publication up for this REF, but they've already started talking about, for the next one, we've got to think about impact. And how do you measure that impact? I've got one PhD student that I'm second supervisor, what we're doing is [topic]. So in one sense, that's a bit away from me. But we've been very fortunate that we've had a small grant to do some research into [topic-specific project]. And I can see there's a lot of potential for that being an impact case in the future, taking it forward. And you have to start planning. I'm not really somebody who's ever sat at the beginning of the year and said, I need to do this, this, this and this to get where I want to. Things have just sort of fallen into place. Probably if I hadn't been involved in those KTPs very early on, I'd probably still be a [previous role]. They made a massive, massive difference and I've never thought about it that way. That has been the single most important thing I think.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting.

##### Participant 55

And what's nice now, there are now management KTPs that you can do. The truth is, I've never had a management KTP. All mine have come through the old route. And we've smiled about it in that sense, because I've got to go and speak on Tuesday at an event about management KTPS. And the KTP advisor was saying just pretend that one was a management one. Don't tell them that we had to go through hoops, because... they have a thing in our KTP region, if you say you're going to do a [management sub-discipline] KTP, they say, oh, sorry, [another institution] should do that, [current institution] doesn't do things like that.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. I find KTPs and stuff really fascinating. I saw recently something about management KTPs being advertised on LinkedIn, so I think it is hopefully sort of gaining a bit of traction, becoming more mainstream.

##### Participant 55

It is. Regardless, because they are a way of really helping companies to... in a funny sort of way, because a lot of companies spend a lot of money on consultants, but I think they use consultants as agents of change and to do the difficult things. And these are about the embedding of the processes so that they know how to do it more in the future and make decisions. So with one of mine, all we did was we put in place a system for [activity]. And it enabled them to actually really sit back and think about things.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. I just want to kind of ask if you could kind of summarise based on your experience at [current institution], going through the ranks and also dealing with these four different strands of work, spinning a lot of plates at the same time, wearing a lot of different hats, that kind of thing, would you say that throughout your career you've had a specific strategy for dealing with everything and for kind of going through the progression? Have you had strategy in mind of how you've kind of navigated it, or has it very much been a case of sort of taking things day by day as they come and just seeing what is going to be around the next corner when it kind of arises?

##### Participant 55

I've not had a strategy for my career, but if somebody says you've got to have four level three publications for the next REF, then I will try to meet those objectives. We have in place metrics around your teaching scores as well, so you need to do that. We have a performance development review every year, so that makes you reflect on what you're doing and where you're going. I haven't had a strategy, but I have realised that you ought to have and I have turned into a bit of a bossy person with respect to people that I know now, because I spend a lot of time saying, you've got to do this, it's not optional. And there's certainly one colleague I know who would say that... it was interesting because when I got promoted, he probably got promoted to SL when I got promoted to [role], and I think we got promoted at the same time. And he's now a prof, and he would say that if it hadn't been for me, absolutely saying, no, you can't do it like you used to anymore, you've got to do this... and I do try to make people now, the university has published very clear guidelines as to this is what you have to do. The guidelines might not be perfect and they probably aren't. They're less clear, I think, for teaching tracks than they are for the normal track, the teaching and research one. But you can see what you've got to do and so it's then thinking about how you can do it and it was only when I actually went for [current role] that I started to realise that it was my impact, it was the thing that was different. Because it was something that I'd actually been doing because I wanted to do it, because I enjoyed it. And it kept me grounded in the outside a little bit.

##### Researcher

Yeah. It was like your unique selling point in a way?

##### Participant 55

Yeah. Only I didn't realise it was my unique selling point. And I didn't realise once you start getting these things, it belongs to, so the interesting thing is I now realise that impact belongs to you. Unless there's a team. It's got to be research that you've done at that university. So actually, impact, I could see that some people would be able to use that as a negotiating point. It's something I would never do. If I went to another job it meant that I would want to leave. I wouldn't ever play the game. Because I just think it, it wastes so much time for people and it just makes me cross that people have to get another job, not to be... because in industry it didn't used to be like that. It wasn't a way of getting promoted. Maybe I'm naïve. I'm good at being naïve. You shouldn't own up to that as an academic, should you? I think the ability to work with companies is... because we've had some colleagues who failed spectacularly in terms of it going very wrong because they just couldn't get it.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and everything.

##### Participant 55

If you've got more questions just drop them to me.

##### Researcher

I'll bear that in mind if any more questions crop up, I can just send you an email. I'll bear that in mind. But I mean I have gone through everything I wanted to ask so that's really good.

##### Participant 55

So, good luck.

##### Researcher

Thank you very much. Thank you. I really enjoyed meeting you today and best of luck.

##### Participant 55

Yeah, best of luck. Bye bye. Keep safe.

##### Researcher

You too. Bye. Bye.

##### Participant 55

Bye.