##### Researcher

Okay, so in terms of, I guess, your own kind of experiences, could you just tell me a little bit about out your kind of career to date and kind of your background, please?

##### Participant 56

Okay. So after graduation, my bachelor's graduation, I initially started working as a [practitioner] for [company] in [home country], and I thought that would be really exciting. That's what I wanted to do. But then I realised that probably I wanted to do something else and that's why I applied for a master's in [management sub-discipline] here at [current institution]. So I finished my MSc in [management sub-discipline] and then I decided, I actually had an inkling that I might be more interested in academia and research and teaching because I've done that before, part time, while I was at university. And then I decided to do that full time. So I went back home after my MSc, I joined academia as a lecturer in [management sub-discipline] at [foreign university], which has one of the best business schools back home. And then when I'd done about a year, less than a year there, I got funding, PhD funding here again at [current institution]. So I came back here, finished my PhD. While I was working on my PhD, I started publishing from my MSc thesis and then on other articles. So I started doing research and publishing way back. And before I had finished my viva, I had an offer from [current institution]. So I joined [current institution] and have been here ever since. So I think initially, based on my background, it's quite an academic background. I had decided very early on that I would like to probably stay on in the research line and I was really interested in teaching. The corporate world, although the job was really exciting, like in terms of [management sub-discipline related activities], that was the exciting part, but the part where you don't really get to see the effects of what you do until some time passes and then... and you would need to do really long hours to actually try to get things in motion. So I couldn't picture myself doing that for the next decade or so and be where my previous boss would be later on. So that's why, there were two reasons I shifted. One was I was more interested in research and teaching. And number two, I wasn't going to live with that corporate lifestyle for a decade or so. So I shifted quite early.

##### Researcher

Based on your experience working at [company] and kind of that corporate world, do you ever see yourself kind of going back into that or do you think you're going to be kind of in academia for the long term now?

##### Participant 56

Yeah, I think in academia for the long term because I think the skills that I have currently are more suited for academic research and teaching. And academic research allows you to do some consultancy projects. I'm currently engaged in management KTPs, knowledge transfer partnerships. I started doing very small consultancy projects. When I'm applying for grants, I've got some grant awards, but those are small grant awards, but the process of actually managing the projects for small grant awards, even that is quite close to what you would have in the corporate world. For example, you have campaigns and communication projects that you have to implement every year. But I do this in my own time, so I have the flexibility to arrange my own time. And that is what I value about academia, I think, apart from the fact that I like doing it. But the secondary factor is I have the flexibility to move things around. Apart from term time teaching, but other times I can move things around.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. And so you just mentioned working on the management KTPs and sort of the consultancy projects. Obviously, I've spoken to a lot of academics, and I know that not all business school academics kind of engage in those things. So how have you come about, for example, working on an mKTP? Is that something that was kind of expected of you, or was that something that you actively kind of sought to do yourself?

##### Participant 56

It's both. So I actively sought it. So I'm not a fresh early career researcher, so I don't think mKTPs are for early career researchers. So, it took me some time to get to the stage where I can do them. So I am applying for mKTPs, so the school encourages it a lot. It is expected. Some sort of knowledge transfer activity is expected, whether it's mKTPs, whether it's some engagement in the community, whether it's consulting, some level of that activity is expected. But I actually actively sought this out. So I let my team members know, my line managers know that I am interested in this. So if there's any opportunity, I'd like to take you up on that. And it took several years to actually start even the process of application. So it's not something that's for early career researchers, definitely, but for more mid level and more senior researchers who are now comfortable at the stage that they are in terms of research and teaching, and then now they can look and focus on other things.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. And so obviously you have your teaching, your research, and this kind of other aspect of it, the kind of engagement impact kind of thing. Is there any kind of one area that you would say is your passion, or do you generally kind of enjoy all aspects of the job?

##### Participant 56

Yeah. Okay. So I probably am one of those that I do enjoy all aspects of the job in the sense that I like that diversity. So if I'm continually teaching I would really get, it would be monotonous for me. So I need a good mix of research, teaching. And because I come from a practitioner background, mKTPs have always sort of aroused my curiosity. I haven't done this before, but it's just this year that I started. So I've always wanted to do that because I think that is what I would be good at in terms of getting the best of both worlds. So I do a bit of research and I translate that research and that knowledge to the actual business and then they come back and then we feedback and then we help them develop the strategy. So I think for me personally, in terms of how I work, I need a good mix. So if I do continuous research, then again, I don't want to do that. I need a bit of teaching. So at specific times, for example, if I do three days a week of teaching, I need to spend two days on research. Otherwise it gets too much for me. So too much of anything for me I can't handle. So I probably try to do a diverse set of activities, which is, I do, on my own, I seek those out.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. And you mentioned before, obviously you have a certain level of flexibility, perhaps not so much with kind of term time teaching, but generally it's quite a flexible and kind of autonomous career. So yeah, in terms of I guess your time in any given academic year, what does it look like for you? Do you have kind of more of a balanced contract between research and teaching or is it, how do your kind of responsibilities play out in that sense?

##### Participant 56

In general, this year has been just bonkers. Basically, there's no other word to describe it. There has been no time to do anything else. But this year has posed so many opportunities because of the fact that the whole world has turned upside down and the dynamic has changed everything. But there are lots of opportunities. So I chose myself to actually do a lot of other things alongside the teaching. But the teaching was an immense load for everybody, like across the board. I haven't spoken to anybody who is teaching this year, since last March till this year, who hasn't felt that immense load on them. Okay, so I'm going to leave this year out. So I'm going to hopefully go back to the trend and hopefully in a year's time we might go back to the usual trend. So in general, the split is usually is 60% teaching and then 40% research. Okay. In that 60% teaching, I think there's a bit of admin also which comes alongside those teaching activities. So that's usually... in other business schools it might be 50 50. Okay. For early career researchers, this teaching load is intense because early career researchers who are on probation, and I'm not an early career researcher, but the first three to four years is immensely hard for early career researchers, because they are on probation usually. They have to publish journal articles at certain rankings to pass probation. But they have a full load of teaching, almost. In [current institution], we have a little bit less because we've got the teaching training involved and because of that they reduce the teaching load a little bit. But even that's not enough. We've always said that's not enough because they are from scratch preparing all these courses. And for me every year there was some new course, which couldn't be helped, but then I had to prepare for that slightly different new course, although in my area. So for early career researchers, the three to four years after joining academia, the load is immense across the board. Some business schools probably may prioritise research a little bit. So they take away some of the teaching. But in most business schools this is the case. When you are used to teaching a few courses, the same courses for the first few years, then you feel the load is a bit less because you're not preparing as much for those courses. But the load is still high. So for me, here, and this is particular to the [current institution], I don't know what's happening outside, our class sizes are huge this year, huge. Because lots of A level students came in and they met the grade criteria, because of how they calculated the grades. But in general, our undergraduate classes, at one go we have between 400 to 600 students coming in every year, undergraduate. So we do have large classes and that's why our teaching, marking, admin, they all take more time. So yes, the load is geared towards teaching. But again, I'm saying, I've passed that stage. So after I passed that early career stage, the first four years, then because I spend a little bit less time preparing, I have this basic thing prepared, I update it every semester, that doesn't take as much time as that used to. Now I can utilise that time a bit towards more research, other impact activities. But in the first four years I used to work every weekend to meet my probation criteria. So I have my teaching, but to meet my probation criteria, I have to work weekends, sometimes leave, but that's my choice. It's not that something the school is telling me to do, but it's something that I felt I had to do to get ahead and pass probation.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. Obviously, lots of different kind of responsibilities there. And you mentioned some of the kind of expectations for passing probation in terms of publications and getting certain ABS ranked journal articles published and that kind of thing. So where you are now, obviously you're not an ECR anymore, you're quite an experienced academic at this point. So in terms of at the moment, at the present time, what are the kind of expectations of you in terms of your research and teaching? Are there still kind of set goals or is it more kind of flexible given that you are doing lots of different things as well?

##### Participant 56

No, there are set goals, but there is flexibility within those set goals. For example, because of the way the government has reduced funding and because when they do the REF calculations, they place more emphasis on level four publications and on impact. So it's predicted that impact and impact case studies will take up even more weight in the next REF even. So the priorities are now that you should try to publish in level four, not three. So quality over quantity. It's better to have one level four rather than two level threes. So it's very clear to us and it's driven home, like in the past four or five years, they're very clear about that, that it's quality over quantity. And then they want us to focus on impact. There's a lot of highlight on impact, so we are encouraged to think about impact case studies, but at the same time, there's a little flexibility there that if you have KTPs, if you're working on KTP, then that's fine. You don't need to have an impact case study, but you do some sort of impact activity, some sort of engaged activity. Increasingly, they're highlighting that there's another very important part of our business school, which is social responsibility which is related impact, and the equality, diversity, inclusion agenda, which has now really become important in our school and also other schools. They highlight that you would need to have some sort of evidence of some sort of social responsibility related activity. So yeah, the criteria for publications are very clear. They want us to focus on, every two years, at least one level four should be published, or if it's a level three, every year. But they are saying that it's better to focus on the four rather than have three every year. They didn't have such clear guidelines just about four or five years ago but it is now very clear. Probation criteria, much more clear. It used to be a bit more flexible, but now they are very strict about the probation criteria. Again, they want to see knowledge transfer and impact activity, some evidence of that. There's a bit of flexibility there, but you need to show that a little bit.

##### Researcher

So you said obviously there's kind of less flexibility with the publications and then impact becomes a bit more flexible. So in respect of that, what kind of attitude does the business school have towards impact and do you think publications are perhaps more valued than taking part in those activities? Or do you think it's kind of an even playing field?

##### Participant 56

Yeah, it's still more valued. I mean, the thing is publications are very easy to judge and evaluate and use for promotions. So I think it's more valued in that way. If you have good research, it's easier to get promoted. But nowadays it has become very important to show some sort of impact and knowledge transfer activity, like even more than before, I would say, because they know, they acknowledge as a business school that this is getting much more weighted in terms of REF evaluation and everything. But in terms of research, there is still much more emphasis on research, mainly because of the REF and the government funding, because if you have fours, then you know that your ranking is secure. Then you know that sort of funding you're going to get next year. The school wants to ensure that at least that funding is ensured for the school in the next REF. So the research is still very important. I would say the most prioritised, definitely. But then again, the impact, if you can show that through impact and knowledge transfer activities, if you're doing well, then that becomes also very important in promotion and the school does value it. It's not that it's not valued, but I would say still research is number one. Pressure to do FT50 publications and level four publications, it still receives high priority.

##### Researcher

And in this scenario, then where you've got these activities that are so valued and so important, where does teaching come into this then?

##### Participant 56

Teaching is still important because of TEF, okay. Because of the Teaching Excellence Framework. I mean, you would say maybe three, four years ago, okay, teaching was taken on the side line, but suddenly TEF appeared and it's still centre stage. So you can't have bad teaching and then get away with it. So there is the teaching focus. But then again, if you are getting, so, we are all evaluated. So there is an unnecessary emphasis on student evaluation. I don't think that's an accurate representation of all teaching activities. But anyways, it's a very easy indicator, so they still use it. If you get four out of five in your evaluations on average, then the university is happy in the sense that, okay, so you are doing well, we would want you to go up to 4.5, but four out of five, you're doing well. And unless there's some indicators that show that students are really unhappy and the NSS scores are dropping year on year, they're okay with that. That's taken care of. So usually I would say the teaching aspect side, it's probably, you can control a bit more. Because research has a lot of uncertainties involved, the publication length, the duration, the process, the reviews, everything. But teaching is under your control as module coordinator. So I think people can actually do a lot of things to try to improve things in that area if needed. So once that is taken care of and the school sees that, okay, you've got your scores right and your feedback, there are no red flags in your feedback, then you can prioritise research. It's not that the school doesn't prioritise teaching, but research is still what brings in the money, in terms of publications, in terms of consultancy, in terms of grant money. So it is still number one. But teaching is definitely centre stage. But the thing is you can control teaching a bit more. Coordinators can pull the right kind of levers and handle that. So I think probably the school thinks that, okay, this is a manageable thing, and as long as student experience is not affected, then we are fine. And the school does try to invest a lot of resources into actually getting the student experience aspect right. So we do have a lot of extracurriculars and informal stuff for students, apart from the programme. And the teaching part they definitely monitor every year. But as I said, it's easily controllable. So it's not too much of a worry or stress factor for the school.

##### Researcher

Okay. And you mentioned that in the past you've ended up working weekends, working during annual leave to get on top of things. It does sound like a very intense workload and obviously the pandemic hasn't helped that because that's involved a move to kind of online teaching and all of that. Have you had to kind of shift your priorities since the pandemic? And have you had to kind of change how you've kind of looked at what you do?

##### Participant 56

I didn't do any written research in the sense of any writing articles during the pandemic, but as I said, I've done KTPs and grant things, which, because of the pandemic, there were opportunities to do that. But actually sitting and writing articles, I didn't do that. So I supervised PG research, I wrote conference papers, I wrote grant proposal - short ones, and I wrote mKTP applications. But actually thinking, reflecting, publishing, writing articles and finishing those, I haven't touched those for this whole academic year. And that should indicate how much of a pressure teaching was because everything was new, we had to overhaul everything. So somebody who hasn't taught during the pandemic will not understand how much pressure, stress and how much of a change that was for everybody. And it's very hard to relay.

##### Researcher

And obviously, even in normal times before the pandemic, the workload was still intense?

##### Participant 56

Yeah, it was intense. As I said, I'm in the mid level of the career, so, for me, it's less intense in the fact that I'm not too nervous about teaching because I've taught so many courses that I know that okay. If they give me this course, it'll take me this much time to prepare. But for early career researchers, it's all from scratch, and that's like, terrible for them. So I would say definitely the probation period, the ECR period, is too tough in academia. It's still very tough in academia. I wouldn't recommend anybody to come to academia unless they actually want to, unless they're sure that this is what they want to do. This is the teaching that they like to do. This is the research that they love to do. Unless you really want to do it, I don't think you can handle the pressure in academia.

##### Researcher

Do you have any kind of ways that you have in the past or at present dealt with the workload in order to kind of get through it? Obviously, you mentioned that you've previously worked weekends and that kind of thing. But do you have any kind of strategies that you can kind of pick out?

##### Participant 56

I'm just trying to think if there are any special strategies. Actually, I think for the first four years I just took it as it came. I just rolled with it. I had a plan, I think in my mind I had said, okay, I've got to get this published. And by hook or by crook, I need to get this published without affecting my teaching. So I just did whatever I had to do to get it published. And I forgot about too many holidays. I forgot about too many weekends just resting. So I mean, I took rest. I mean, obviously I took one day of the weekend off, but the other day I was working. I didn't work maybe two evenings, and the other three evenings I was working. So I did that consciously. And I think that is what I needed to do to make sure that I was not on the borderline, that I wasn't at risk of not passing probation. So other people, other colleagues have not passed probation at that time, but they've extended their probation period. So, I didn't want that. There's the flexibility that they will give you maybe one year more time if you haven't passed that time, then you might not worry about it. But I did. So, strategies, I would say you need to learn to say no to certain things from the beginning in the sense that you will have to think, is this contributing to my probation? And at my stage now, is this contributing to what I want to do in terms of research and impact? If not, then don't do it. Even if it's an admin activity, so, certain things you have to do to help other people out, you have to do that. But there are certain things like attending lots of conferences, lots of seminars, that might add value for a certain project, but you should be very careful about doing that because too much of that will just eat up your time. Having a plan helps, like having a checklist. But I mess up my checklist a lot because lots of other things go on. But I know people who are very good at checklists. So I know people who do that very consciously and they are good at it. I'm not very good at it. I'm not very good at switching between teaching and research. So I try to finish my teaching and then I do research, which is bad in some cases, but I know other people do a bit of research every single day, which is, I think, very good, but that's a strategy I am still struggling to cope with. I think I need two dedicated days of research and then the other three teaching. I need to separate it. I think you have to find your own way of working. It's very hard to do that because I've got a family, so I actually am used to working evenings and nights because I like that. So during the day, lots of things might happen, especially during the pandemic, children get sent home, you have to pick up children. So I'm used to working evenings and nights, and to me, that's acceptable because during the day I have that sort of flexibility and other uncertain things coming in and changing my schedule. So again, other people might not be used to working evenings. They just stop at five and that's it. And I know people who do that. I know colleagues who do that. So I would say you would have to find your own way.

##### Researcher

Absolutely.

##### Participant 56

But again, I do it because I enjoy it. So I think somebody who doesn't enjoy teaching or who doesn't enjoy research will find it difficult to balance.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely. Okay. Well, that's really interesting. I'm happy to sort of end things now and let you go. So unless you had any final kind of comments or anything off the top of your head that you feel that you haven't had a chance to mention yet that you think is important for this kind of area?

##### Participant 56

So overall, I think because of the way the REF is structured, there is a lot more pressure for research, and I think there are still staff who will do excellent research and get away with no teaching because they have bought their teaching out, because they've got grants. So then that teaching pressure falls on the other colleagues, which is fine, but then the school needs to recruit resources, which they do, but it takes time. So again, six months, one year to recruit new people. Within that six months, one year, there's a lot more pressure on the current teaching staff. So I think we need teaching staff, like core teaching staff on the teaching track. We do have that, but we don't have enough. I think the school is reluctant to invest only on teaching staff because then they don't do research. So they need to find a balance. I don't know how they're going to do that, but they need to find a way.

##### Researcher

That's a really interesting final point. Thank you for sharing that and thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it. It's been really interesting to hear about your experiences so thank you very much.

##### Participant 56

You're welcome. And all the best with your research.

##### Researcher

Thank you and best of luck with everything with you as well. Thank you very much. Bye

##### Participant 56

Bye.