##### Researcher

Okay, so obviously I've had a look at your profile, so I know a little bit about you in terms of that, but I guess just in your own words, could you tell me about yourself in terms of your background, your career to date and what you're doing at the moment, please?

##### Participant 57

Yeah, sure. So, I'll start with where I am at the moment. So I'm a [role] of [management sub-discipline] in the business school at [current institution]. I was promoted to [role] last year, which in itself was a stressful process because of Covid-19. It's stressful anyway, but it was made slightly more stressful. But I've worked at the business school since 2006, so I've been there for about 15 years and started as a lecturer. Prior to that, I did my PhD in [PhD institution] and I did some lecturing there and lecturing in [a nearby university]. And then I did some part time kind of lecturing, I covered someone's study leave at [current institution] and then ultimately was approached and asked if I would be interested in applying for a lectureship, which was just as I was coming to the end of my PhD. I'd seen the job ad and kind of gone, there's no point applying for that because I haven't finished my PhD yet. But then I was asked to apply, which I did, and obviously I got the job, which was great. So I actually started work just before I finished my PhD, which I don't believe would happen now. I think things have changed. I was quite fortunate, but also worked hard as well.

##### Researcher

Absolutely. So that obviously was a decision you made, to kind of go into academia. What was it that kind of, I guess, inspired you or motivated you to kind of go into that, as opposed to, there's so many different things you can do. So why was it an academic career?

##### Participant 57

It's an interesting, kind of an accidental... it happened accidentally, so I'll try and keep it short. So when I was doing my undergraduate degree. So we're going back quite a while, 20 years. Over 20 years. I did a joint degree between [two subjects] and I was interested in, I was kind of doing that thing where you go, what can I do? What do I want to do next? I thought I do have an interest in [management sub-discipline], so I went to the careers service and said, I'm interested in finding out a bit more about this. And at that point they told me, we don't think you can go into that because you're doing a joint degree rather than specialising in [subject]. And I went fair enough and that was it, or so I thought. And then a few months later, the woman from the careers service got in touch with me and she went, this is really random, but we've just had a guy come in who's a [practitioner] and he's interested in having someone working on a placement for him. So would you be interested? I mean, what are the odds of that? I ended up going, yes, of course. So I did a bit of work with him while I was finishing my undergraduate degree. And he kept saying to me, you need to do a master's. And I was like, I can't afford to do a master's, I've got two young kids and he was like, he encouraged me and eventually almost to shut him up, I was like, I'll apply for [current institution]. So I applied and then I got offered a place and then it was like, well, I can't really turn it down now. It's a really good opportunity. So I got a career development loan at the time to pay for it, which was like quite a big decision. Anyway, so did the master's. And then I was like, now I need to look for work. So I started looking for work and there was a research job in [PhD institution]. So applied for the job, got an interview for the research post, went to the interview, and during the interview, the guy who was interviewing me was kind of like, this is the research, blah, blah, blah, if you'd be interested in doing a PhD, you could do a PhD alongside the research post. And I just kind of went, oh, yeah, that sounds good. I'd never thought about doing a PhD, so I ended up, got hired, I worked in [PhD institution] for about five years, four or five years in total. I did my PhD alongside the research. So it's all been kind of accidental in a way. I didn't actually plan to go into academia.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 57

So it's been a series of chance and opportunities and luck. I think I'm quite unusual, I think, in the way I've kind of stumbled into it and then ended up staying for 20 years.

##### Researcher

Yeah. Something I kind of want to ask you, because obviously, being in between two disciplines, did you kind of envision that you would end up in a business school? Were you thinking you could have gone down a different route? How did that kind of play out?

##### Participant 57

Yeah, I think I could have done either. For me, I've ended up in a business school because that's where the master's in [management sub-discipline] is positioned in [current institution], whereas other universities may have their MSc in [alternative discipline] department. [Current institution] has it in the business school. That's really just why. I'm glad I'm in the business school. I think the opportunities for research are much greater from being in the business school rather than being in the [alternative discipline] department for the type of research that I do. And also the collaborations that I have. But, yeah, I think it's purely just the way in which the university is structured that means I've gone into that kind of department. I mean, we're in [faculty], which, again, is not always going to be the same case, it depends. Universities are weird, right? They're all structured slightly differently.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely.

##### Participant 57

And I think there's been talks, not recent talks, but over the years there have been talks about whether the business school should be kind of a faculty in its own right or whether it should be situated somewhere else. So it's almost like we don't really fit in, but it really makes little difference to me on a day to day basis. I'm just going to do the job and go home.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely. And so obviously at the moment, you've gone from lecturer to where you are now. So, obviously a senior academic at this point. What are your kind of responsibilities in any kind of given academic year? Are you doing teaching and research and do you have any kind of admin responsibilities? How does your kind of working life look at the moment?

##### Participant 57

I mean, I do both, so I'm employed in a teaching and research position. So broadly speaking, I'm meant to do about 40% research, 40% teaching and 20% admin. That's kind of the broad categories. I mean, it doesn't really kind of neatly fall like that, but I do a significant amount of teaching. I have to do the research and the admin. The admin ebbs and flows. I mean, there's admin with every part of the job anyway. It is just part of it. I have, over the years, held a number of positions, so I was head of group for a while, which carries more of a significant load. I've been director of an MSc, which again is another kind of admin kind of position. And [current institution] has a work allocation model, which is kind of meant to monitor the workload that we have. It's typically used more as a stick to beat you with rather than something to protect you by. But that means that we do have an idea of the type, of the amount of work that we're doing on any particular thing, whether it's research based or not. That's all kind of fallen apart a little bit, even more than normal over the last year or so. You're going to be well aware yourself of the challenges of the last year or so in academia. But we were kind of explicitly told by the university a year ago to kind of do less research and do more teaching and I've never heard that message ever in my time here. So that's really kind of unusual. But I do think that is shifting back now, and we're gonna be, as we always are, we'll be evaluated by our research quality and not the teaching quality.

##### Researcher

And just going back to the admin positions that you spoke about, being head of group, being director of an MSc programme. So those kinds of roles, are they things that you kind of actively sought doing and you were thinking, that might be useful for me to do? Or was it kind of like more of a necessary thing, thinking, I need to do some admin role? Or was it something that you were picked for? How does that kind of play out, getting those kind of positions?

##### Participant 57

It's a bit of both, I think. I think for me personally, I did the MSc director role quite early on in my career, so I think I did that because I was interested. But also I think someone had gone off sick so there was a need for someone to step up. And I was already doing the teaching. So that kind of just happened. With the head of group, I was approached and asked if I would be interested in doing it. But part of the reason I agreed to do it is because by that point in my career I was well aware that you had to take on certain roles to be able to kind of both progress, but also just to be seen to be performing adequately and head of group felt like the type of thing that I'd probably quite enjoy, which I did to some extent. All jobs have pros and cons, don't they? It was a decision, but you have to take on some admin roles. It's kind of expected. So one of the things I do now, because I mentor a few more junior members of staff, and one of the jobs I see as part of that is kind of making sure that people are aware that taking these kind of roles is quite valuable career wise and to maybe plan ahead a little bit in terms of thinking about what sort of thing might be useful to do, or what you might be interested in, or even just going to whoever's head of group at the moment and saying let me know if anything's coming up.

##### Researcher

And in terms of the core aspects of the job, the sort of, the 40 40 element of it, the teaching and the research, is there a kind of particular side that you would say you're particularly passionate about or do you generally quite enjoy both sides, research and teaching, equally?

##### Participant 57

That's a hard question. I do like both. I do like both. I get a lot out of the teaching. I enjoy it. I hate marking, which, everyone hates marking. I really enjoy the research, but I like the impact side. That's where I'm making probably the biggest contribution. And again, I think it's a mixture of being fortunate but also doing what you're, playing to your strengths. The impact work has been seen as more valuable now than it was five years ago, and I did have an impact case entered into the REF, which has made a big difference in terms of how I am viewed. Because I'm also REF-able for my publications, but probably only just. So I'm not sitting alongside the really heavy hitters who are publishing just fantastic papers all the time. I'm kind of probably doing enough, but I'm not at the top. But with the impact stuff, I'm doing really well and I've just been quite fortunate because that is now being valued. So the answer is, I like both. But if it was just publishing and teaching, I think I'd probably like the teaching a bit more. But because I'm doing the impact work, I think both.

##### Researcher

Well, that's really interesting. Talking about the impact side, enjoying those kind of activities, can you just tell me a bit more about what those activities actually are? So is that like KTPs? Is that like consultancy? What kind of things have you been doing?

##### Participant 57

Yeah, it's not consultancy. So I do a lot of work with [government agency] and I do a lot of work looking at, I mean, my background is [area] and I'm really interested in [topic], so I've been kind of creating a story, I suppose, about my research about, that is my area, and how do we try to protect that? So I've had a number of different funded grants that have allowed me to do research in that. But as part of that, I've developed a network. It's called the [network], and I've done a lot of research with companies directly looking at their [phenomena] and kind of doing research in that way. But instead of just publishing papers, I've published a [government agency] report and I've developed this network and I've got the website and then that enabled me to work directly with organisations about advising them about how to [activity] and then that forms part of the impact case. So that's one bit of it. But at the same time, I've also worked with [organisations]. So I sit on different panels and committees and things. So again, that all builds the impact case, because when you kind of go, I don't know if you've ever done an impact case, they're a nightmare, but you have to have pieces of evidence. So I've had to get kind of letters from companies saying, oh, yes, her research told us this, and we implemented this by creating new support or implementing different things. And then the outcome of that has been X, Y and Z. So there's like an evidence trail. And then with the kind of like the [organisations], they would write statements saying, she advised us on this bit of policy and that allowed us to create this, which was put in place for [local authority]. So it's not an easy thing, but I just find that I enjoy it and I'm quite good at it. I'm better at doing that than I am at sitting down and writing a really complex paper, which I find really boring. I need to do both. The thing with being an academic is they want you to be good at everything, but the reality is that everyone's going to be better at some things than others. Does that answer your question?

##### Researcher

Yeah, definitely. And in terms of all those different kind of activities that you've engaged in, are they things that you actively seek doing, or are they things where the opportunity has come to you? How are those kind of opportunities identified?

##### Participant 57

Again, a little bit of both. So some things have just come up. There's a research institute at [current institution] called [research institute] and I was asked to sit on that, this is years and years ago, sit on their management board, and then I got to know a few people and then occasionally little bits of opportunities come your way because, this is cross faculty, and the more you kind of get linked into these things, the more people go, oh, I know someone in the business school who does that. I'll give her a shout. And the same with, like, sitting on the [organisation], so by being on that committee, sometimes they've been, oh, we're doing a seminar or a full day seminar in the town hall, would you be interested in talking? Because I decided a number of years ago to kind of pursue an impact case, I knew at that point to kind of try and take up all of these opportunities that I could, but that on its own isn't enough for the impact. You've got to do the research as well. So I got some funding to allow me to do that. So I was kind of actively working towards this impact case. It's paid off because the impact case actually went in. If that hadn't have gone in, I think it could have been a really risky strategy, in terms of the university going like, well, what have you done? And you go, well, I nearly had an impact case. It's not enough. Whereas if you have, well I have three papers instead of four, that's not too bad. But an impact case either exists or it doesn't. So it was potentially risky but probably a sensible decision because I think I would have struggled to get the papers. And I wouldn't have enjoyed it as much.

##### Researcher

Absolutely. Yeah. Well, that's really interesting. So in terms of, I guess the business school and their kind of, the environment of the business school, what is the general kind of attitude towards impact? Do you generally feel like you're quite well supported in doing those activities, even though it might, for example, take away from publication time or writing paper time? Do you feel like the attitude towards impact helps you kind of engage in those activities?

##### Participant 57

I would say yes, now, but only fairly recently. And probably only because they could see that I was going to be able to put an impact case in. I think up until the point at which that would become a real likelihood, I don't think there was very much support at all. And certainly I would say four years ago I was probably viewed as underperforming, whereas now I've just been promoted on the back of my impact activities, and a range of other things. Because promotion is over a number of categories. So I don't think there's enough support for it. But I think it's got better. But I'm probably a little bit skewed because I'm probably getting support that other people aren't. So somebody else who's maybe trying to do what I'm doing but isn't maybe recognised as being successful at impact probably isn't getting the support, but it's definitely got better. It's better than it was 5, 10 years ago, because I've been doing these kind of things for quite a while with no recognition at all. So it's only just fairly recently, the last two years, maybe, probably a little bit more - I'm forgetting COVID times - probably two and a half years where they've actively said, yeah, you know, keep doing this. In the business school you can do additional teaching on our global MBA. If you are over your workload and you do the additional teaching, you can get extra pay for it. I was invited to do that because I'm good at teaching and my head of school at the time blocked me from doing it because she said I didn't have publications. So she wanted me to not take on additional work and just focus on doing this. And I was really annoyed because I was like, but I've got all this Impact stuff and I'm working on an impact case. So I went to see the director of research, made an appointment with him, and just said, do you want me to stop doing the impact activities? Is that what you want me to do? And he was like, no, we definitely don't want you to stop doing that. And I'm like, well, I'm kind of being reprimanded because I'm not doing this, but that's because I'm doing all of this. I mean, to be fair, he was good. He handled the meeting, you know, we know that it's really valuable what you're doing, we definitely don't want you to stop doing the impact. As a university, we do need to move more towards valuing people for what they're doing. But the way the system is set up, I mean, I didn't end up doing the teaching and getting the extra pay. They didn't change the rules. But he made me feel better about it, and he made me feel like I was more supported. And I did what you do in these situations. I followed it up with an email that went, thank you for the meeting, as we discussed, I will carry on focusing on my impact activities. So I documented it. Obviously it has paid off, but that was, the kind of the feeling at the time was they don't really care about what I'm doing, which is very frustrating.

##### Researcher

Yeah. In terms of, that's obviously a very kind of unique experience of someone who is in that situation and is doing that work but doesn't necessarily feel like it's overly valued or supported. At that point, would the business school kind of be talking about impact? Was it something that they were kind of promoting on the outside? But then you obviously felt a different kind of way? I would be interested to know.

##### Participant 57

Absolutely, yeah, definitely. So the rhetoric was very much like, impact is important. And even then at that point, they knew that impact was going to form a big part of the REF. They had impact officers in place. They were sort of talking the talk, but at the same time, they were kind of giving really quite negative messages to people like myself who ultimately, I mean, the business school put ten impact cases in, and I was one of the ten. So it's a small field of people. So yeah, they were very much kind of outwardly saying the right things, but actually not backing it up with their actions, which as a business school is really frustrating because you're like, we're meant to know better than this. We know how to motivate people. We know how to reward people. In fact, we teach people how to do this. We teach people how to be good leaders, and we don't always follow our own teachings as such. But it is changing. I think it is changing, but it's not changed enough yet. It will be easier for me because I've now got that as a track record. So for the next REF cycle, whenever that is, or whatever it is, I think it's quite likely that I will get support because they'll be like, oh, well, she did that last time. But how easy it will be for somebody else to go into that direction, I'm less sure.

##### Researcher

And would you say this kind of shift in attitude is kind of purely because, obviously the RAE didn't have any kind of impact element to it, and then when the REF was introduced, the impact case studies became a part of it. Do you think that is the principal kind of reason behind why impact is now being acknowledged?

##### Participant 57

I think that's the only reason. It's a very strategic decision, same as like, everything they do is strategic, which is kind of fair enough, right? So the appointments that they make will depend on your likelihood of being REF-able. The promotions that they make are dependent on how REF-able you are. I mean, this is just the way it is. They should put more emphasis on teaching. But again, there's an element of lip service, I think. That has got better. It has got better than it was ten years ago. But you're never going to get promoted for being a brilliant teacher, it's just never going to happen, or not in a kind of a top university. And you wouldn't get recruited for it. You'll get recruited because you've published a four star paper, three four star papers or whatever. It's got so much harder.

##### Researcher

And why do you think that is the case with teaching? Why do you think that is kind of the way things are, that being a good teacher wouldn't necessarily lead to a promotion? Why is it kind of, I guess, viewed as secondary to research? I would just be interested to know from your perspective.

##### Participant 57

Yeah, I suppose because, it depends where you work. But somewhere like [current institution], I think because they are research institutions, the REF and the funding is all built around the research, so that's what's rewarded. I understand it. That's why they put the emphasis on that, because that's the way in which all the funding is set up. The teaching, you've still got to be a good teacher. You can't be a terrible teacher and you can't just not bother with it. But at the same time, there's not the same incentives. And also it doesn't make you really valuable to other institutions either. So no matter, if I can get brilliant student ratings, it's not going to make somewhere else want to give me a job, whereas if I have really good publications or a great impact case and my teaching is good enough, then that will be fine. So you need to be good enough, but you don't need to be amazing. But that's the way the system is set up. I don't think that, it's not the individual university that's at fault I don't think. It's just the way the whole system set up. I don't agree with it, but there you go.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. So you mentioned that in the past year specifically the workload allocation model, for example, it's a bit more difficult to kind of stick to the kind of specific expectations of teaching time, research time, et cetera. Could you, I guess, kind of tell me what your kind of experience has been from a professional standpoint, from a working standpoint, how Covid-19 has kind of affected you in terms of your workload and how you've, I guess, had to kind of prioritise things? If you've had to change anything about your role and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 57

I mean, how long have you got? I mean, the immediate, obvious impact is I haven't been in the office for 16 months now. I've purely worked from home. That brought some challenges, but I'm quite fortunate. I've got a nice house, I've got space to work, I've got the equipment that I need. I don't have young children. So those kind of challenges aren't there. The kind of, the video technology, it has its downsides, but it is also quite good as well. So you can get meetings together really quickly. You can get a lot of people around the table. So it's not really prevented me from doing research. But I think you've just got to be careful about how you balance your workload. That's kind of one aspect of it. In terms of workload, it's just been crackers. It's been beyond anything that you could think. If we go back like a year ago where we were starting to think about having to deliver everything online but not knowing, you know, and we're still in that position now because we don't really know what's going to happen next. So that's where the work allocation really fell down, I think, because in normal times, what would happen is you get allocation for every lecture, you get allocation for marking, you get allocation for all of this, but you also get allocation for developing a new module or rewriting a module so you get given a bit of time that kind of allows you to do that. But what they did with Covid-19 was, and everyone was the same, so it was like you've got to turn all of your teaching material into online lectures. You've got to prerecord everything. You've got to do live lectures, all of the stuff that we've seen over the last year. But we didn't get any workload allocation for that at all. So we got the same allocation as if we just carried on teaching in person. But in actual fact, we had to rewrite all of our materials and we have to prerecord all the lectures. And we had to have additional student contact time because we had to split groups, it was people who might be in person or who might not. And then everything ended up being online. So it was all like rapid change. So just from a teaching point of view, there was a huge expansion of work and no recognition for it in terms of any workload allocation. So we've all worked much longer hours and academics work ridiculously long hours anyway, right? From a research point of view, it's also been really busy for me. So I've ended up doing quite a few Covid-19 related studies, which again has been really interesting. But I'm linked into another research institute that's in conjunction with [government agency]. That has brought in a certain number of Covid-19 related research studies, but all of those have been rapid studies. Fast turn around. We needed the answers yesterday sort of thing. I mean, I like that kind of research. I like feeling like I'm doing something that makes a difference. I'd rather do that than kind of write a theoretical paper about a model that nobody will ever read, but it brings its own kind of demand. So doing that alongside all of the teaching has been tough, but it kept me busy. So it's swings and roundabouts.

##### Researcher

Absolutely. Yeah. That's really interesting. And in terms of that kind of intense workload, would you say that you have a particular way of kind of managing that or dealing with that? Obviously, as you said, working crazy long hours has become part of the job and that is obviously one way of dealing with the workload. But have you had to sort of say no to certain things? Have you had to prioritise certain things? Have you had to, you know, I don't know, any other kind of things you can think of that you might have had to do to kind of deal with that kind of workload?

##### Participant 57

Yeah. I mean, I've not written anything, so that would be the first thing. So I haven't written any papers because I've been focusing on all of the other stuff. I mean, I've written reports and stuff, but I've not written any papers. I don't really worry about that. What will be will be. But I mean, ten years ago, I'd have been really worried about that. I know colleagues who are on probation who were really worried about the fact that they've not progressed their publishing. So that's one thing. So, I prioritise, I made a very clear decision that I would prioritise the teaching and the Covid-19 research because I thought if I can make any kind of contribution during this pandemic, that's the contribution I can make, which is to keep the students happy or at least make sure they get what they need, even if they're not happy about it. But also I can do a bit of the research. That's what I can do. And the other things can kind of fall by the wayside. Additionally, I'm quite good at kind of having boundaries on my time. But I do work long hours and I don't take breaks as much as I should. But I also make sure that when I knock off, I do have time off in an evening and I make sure that I don't work weekends unless it's essential. You get work that creeps into the weekends, but I try to do it as little as I can. And I think I'm quite unusual when I compare myself to my colleagues who I know work late into the evenings and into the weekends. But that's probably why they'll be publishing and I won't. But I'm happy with that decision. But I'm in a position in my career where I can make that decision as well.

##### Researcher

Absolutely.

##### Participant 57

I get counselling. I have counselling once a month, which was arranged a number of years ago for health reasons, but that's still in place, and that's been really helpful in terms of making sure that work doesn't overwhelm you too much. So just having someone who says, don't do that, are you sure that's a good idea, or just talking about stuff, I think that's really valuable.

##### Researcher

Absolutely.

##### Participant 57

So, yeah, that's pretty much what I've done.

##### Researcher

I think that's really interesting. I have sort of I guess one final question. I just wanted to ask, I guess, what your kind of view for the future is in terms of your kind of professional life, your working life and your career. So you're obviously already [role], where do you kind of see yourself going from here? Are you sort of content with staying at the same institution? Are you looking to take on any kind of bigger roles with more, I guess, visibility? Or are you not so much thinking about the future in that way but just taking each day as it comes? I'd be interested to know.

##### Participant 57

Yeah. I mean, I have no desire to take on a really kind of high profile role. So I think I'm probably happy to stay as I am, but continue, to the best of my ability, continue the impact activities. So, that's what I enjoy. A lot of my teaching, I've actively developed teaching that looks at [topics], and I get a lot of satisfaction out of that. So those, I think, would be my two priorities, to kind of teach the stuff that I think is important because I'm teaching topics to business students who wouldn't always get those messages, so that feels quite satisfying. And then carry on with the impact work. Also, I don't really want to change institutions necessarily. I'm quite happy where I am. I don't see any real kind of need to do that. But - this is quite kind of flippant but it also kind of isn't - it's like. If we have another year like this, I think I may just have some time off sick, because I think next year a lot of people are going to kind of be hitting burnout levels. Now, obviously, I hope that doesn't happen, but it's not sustainable as it is now. We'll see. I'll either carry on doing what I'm doing or I'll go off sick for a bit, but hopefully carry on doing what I'm doing. Hopefully go back into the office for a bit of face to face teaching, see what happens.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you for sharing that. And yeah, I think in terms of questions, I'm done asking any direct questions so I'm sort of happy to end things there. We've made good time.

##### Participant 57

Perfect timing. You have done it 57 times so you're probably getting very good at this.

##### Researcher

Haha. It's been really interesting to talk to you and I've got a huge page of notes which is always a really good sign of a good interview. So, yeah. Thank you so much for your time.

##### Participant 57

No, you're welcome. Good luck with it. You're going to have a tonne of analysis to do, aren't you?

##### Researcher

Yes, a lot of analysis to do.

##### Participant 57

Well, good luck with it.

##### Researcher

Thank you very much. And I'll let you go now, but best of luck with everything and enjoy the rest of your day.

##### Participant 57

Alright. Good luck, too. Bye.

##### Researcher

Thank you very much. Bye.