



INFLUENCE OF PART-TIME LECTURING ON RESEARCH AMONG UNIVERSITIES' ACADEMIC STAFF IN KENYA

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Abstract:

It is evident that Kenya has reached the golden age, where student enrollments have outstripped universities' capacities. This paper highlights the importance of research amongst part time faculty, and seeks to lead to awareness about their professional responsibility. The paper gives a background to the concept of research among non-tenure track faculty members. The statement of the problem under consideration is raised as well as the research questions that will need answers as it progresses. The paper then delves into the literature review to support the subject premise. Finally, conclusions and recommendations will be drawn. The findings of the paper will confirm the need for universities to invest in research amongst both tenure and non-tenure-track faculty in order to increase their presence amongst other universities and as well their faculty base.

Keywords: tenure-track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, part-time lecturers, full-time lecturers, culture, white-space, teaching specialists

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Institutions of higher learning expect their faculty to involve themselves in teaching, scholarly and service activities. Another expectation is that faculty should achieve a certain level of excellence within each of these three areas in order to remain relevant or gain recognition and promotion. A newspaper article in one of the Kenyan dailies

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observed that non-tenure track faculty who take on many course loads yet service more than one department or university have been dubbed “bicycle lecturers” or “bodaboda lecturers” (or otherwise commonly referred to as moonlighters) due to their characteristic style of shuttling between universities by use of the most viable means of transport. Essentially this would mean teaching is their primary role by choice thus negating the job mandate. The ratio of student to lecturer outstrips the enrolment, and this is evidenced by the increase in the high population obtaining minimum university admission requirements every year. Further, the Self-Sponsored Programs (SSPs) are in high demand, with some universities running evening programs (Parallel Programs) or the Modular in a bid to meet the needs of the market. To mitigate this, universities have engaged in contingent positions of the tenure track both as part timers or adjunct faculty members, fulltime non-tenure track faculty members or graduate student teaching assistants commonly known as Tutorial Fellows. Due to the high demand, both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty use the same notes over and over, and everywhere they visit as part time faculty.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

But for all that, the major responsibilities detailed in the job description of tenure track faculty remain clear, especially when contemplated in the light of the professorial; to teach, conduct research and contribute to existing knowledge. However, a new trend toward “teaching specialists” has emerged i.e. faculty who would be tenure track (full time) but who prefer teaching and are very good at it (Monks, 2007) and not interested in delving into research. While non-tenure track utilize most of their time travelling and teaching, tenure track faculty utilize their time teaching different groups in session at any given semester throughout the academic calendar, sometimes oscillating between departments. When do they give room to allow theory to interrogate theory during discourse (if any)? Have dons become “teaching specialists”. What is the place of “teaching specialists in institutions of higher learning?” The pages on which the notes were first written have since changed from white to yellow. Have “yellow pages” become the new teaching resource? The over concentration on part timing has created such concerns. These concerns have created “white space” (vacuum) in research.

1.3 Research Questions

The major concern of this paper is the lack of research amongst part timing faculty - understood as the “white space” in research. Under extreme indulgence in part timing, lecturers are unable to conduct research or make any meaningful contribution to existing knowledge. That “white space” exists amongst both tenure-track, non-tenure-track faculty is not questioned, and overcoming this academic stagnation in the academia was the main target of the workshop where this paper was first presented.

1.4 Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the factors that have contributed to the lack of research among part timing faculty amongst lecturers in Kenyan universities. A related objective was to assess the importance of research as a determinant in scholarly recognition, promotion and relevance among both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty. Universities expect their faculty to achieve a certain level of excellence because research is beneficial to both faculty and the university that employs them.

1.5 Problem Statement

Based on the foregoing, the following research questions were constructed to guide the literature review:

1. Does part timing faculty engage in research?
2. Why are the part timers not engaging in research?
3. Are there any restraining factors that hinder research amongst part timing faculty?
4. What is the opinion of part-timing faculty towards research?

2. Literature Review

However, this study mainly reports on the literature that informs the questions stated above by providing information on the context of the study, and illuminating what is currently known about the common indulgence of part-timing faculty in research, and also by referring to the benefits of research to universities and the professorial.

2.1 Introduction of Research and Part-timing

This paper reviews literature on part-timing and research amongst university lecturers. Several studies have been conducted internationally to the hiring of part timing faculty. However, very few studies have actually explored part timing and research amongst part timing faculty in Kenya.

The author of this paper, observed that part timing faculty seem neither able to utilize their opportunities by engaging in research, nor adequately exploit their time and presence in the universities to delve into research. Part-timers seem to be apathetic towards research believing that they are derided as “mere” teachers who did not make it to full time faculty positions. As observed by the Chronicles of Higher Education, part timers work for low pay and scant benefits relative to their level of education and training. Monks (2007) argues that non-tenure track faculty is an exploited workforce and wonders why they are willing to work under such conditions. According to Gappa (2007), research is expensive. It demands money, and therefore, need to be properly

funded. As many relevant research sources are available in institutions of higher learning, more research should be promoted and the researchers supported. This study, therefore, aimed at examining part-timing and research amongst faculty in Kenyan universities. It is the author's contention that part time faculty understands that the greatest challenge is that academicians have the responsibility to balance communities by critically questioning issues and asking provocative questions. To interrogate communities would require that one gets accustomed to interrogative language and research. Further, lecturers need to occupy a place of leadership in communities and create a public presence. Scholars should, therefore, not separate teaching from research, for both affect each other in the world of scholarship.

2.2 The Concept of Research

Scholars have long recognized that research is the key determinant in the world of scholarship. Research is the steer that paddles the world of academia. A key primary role in the job description of lecturer is to educate, be involved in research development, author articles for publication and contribute to existing knowledge. Faculty are usually judged, reviewed and promoted by how much research funding they attract. Those who adeptly publish are poised for recognition by the universities that employ them. Research is, therefore, beneficial to both faculty and the university that employs them. In fact, university students have enormous respect for lecturers who quote and make references to their own research and peer reviewed journal articles. And students are proud to quote their own course lecturers.

2.3 Research and its Relevance to Academic Growth

The desire for every lecturer is to be referred to as Professor. But the title of professor is a pedagogical-academic title awarded to university teachers holding a PhD or equivalent who excel in a specific field of science and have special merits in both research and university teaching (Professor 2014. retrieved 5/8/2014). That title is awarded to a particular person on the basis of recommendation by a university which is accredited to do so. The system of awarding of the title 'professor' means that the title is not bounded to a position at a university e.g. a head/chair of a department. Unlike universities in developed countries, in Kenya one is required to be a professor to hold a high ranking position at a university. However, a university must have a certain number of professors and docents among its staff to receive accreditation for its study programs, but these need not necessarily be heads of departments or deans. Notable in the accreditation is the amount of research conducted by the faculty. Professors at research oriented universities in the U.S., Canada and generally at European universities, are promoted on the basis of research achievements and external fund-raising success (Professor 2014. Retrieved 5/8/2014). A digital survey on the

requirements to professorial titles elicited the following: In Colombia the title of professor is conferred upon an individual with a long research and recognized scientific work and production; Finland, qualifications for a professor are a doctor's degree and an extensive independent publication record, the PhD does not qualify. Scholars who may wish to enter a more permanent academic career are examined by a selection committee, composed exclusively of full professor, mostly or their published original research. In The Indian University of Technology, reviews for promotion require a certain number of journals and conference publications. To get a promotion to Associate Professor at least three publications (in a reputed journal) are required. In the Netherlands, a professor should have substantial research achievements and international reputation and in the U.S., applicants are evaluated based on their contributions to research teaching and administration, with some PhD granting universities placing more emphasis on research. It is reported that part time faculty typically (though not always) focus on teaching under graduate courses, do not engage in research (except in the case of research professor). In Pakistan, review requires a certain number of research publications. And in Kenya, the Universities Act of 2012 defines an academic staff as a "person appointed to teach, train or to do research at a university designated as such by the university council". Many people rightly argue that professional appointment should not be based on longevity, loyalty or sheer availability of vacancies to be filled, but rather on prowess evidenced by ground breaking research, teaching and outreach. However, professorship should not be a reward for loyalty (Professor 2014.Retrieved 5/8/2014).

2.4 History of Part-Time Teaching

The history of part time teaching in institutions of higher learning dates back to the years 1945 and 1975 when soldiers returning after World War II used their government-subsidized tuition and flooded into American colleges and universities (online library.wiley.com/doi.10.1002/he/308/PDF, Retrieved 27/7/14). According to Toutkoushian and Bellas (2003) part time faculty have long played an important role in U.S post-secondary education. Jacobs (1998) explained that beginning in the late Middle Ages, priests visited colleges and universities to pursue scholarly interests and to collaborate with other researchers. Following the Civil War, professionals began to teach part time, providing expertise unavailable among fulltime faculty. America had reached the golden age (Gappa, Austin and Trice 2007; Cohen, 1998). This presented a new test in the provision of quality education. The most lasting solution among many others lay with increasing contracts of part timing faculty who worked for lower pay, required little or no professional development support, and could be hired or released quickly [AAUP (2003); Meyer(1998); Baldwin and Chronister (2001)]. It is likely this tendency will go on as universities do not have capacity. Universities expect their

faculty to participate in teaching, scholarly, and service activities. Full time faculties are required to serve on committees, conduct research and publish articles. Above all, they are expected to be more productive in the area of scholarship (Glover & Deziel-Evans, 2002).

2.5.1 Kinds of Part-Time Lecturers

Most full timers began their faculty careers in part time positions. Perhaps that is why some part timers long to obtain tenure track positions in the long run. The 1995 AAUP describes three kinds of part timers namely:

1. The non-tenure- track faculty who has a full time job elsewhere and would not prefer to be hired as tenure-track faculty;
2. The non-tenure-track faculty who depend only on part timing as their source of income;
3. Those part timers who are retired from another job but like to eke out an extra shilling and at the same time keep their minds alert.

2.5.2 Part-Time Appointments Are Further Divided into Three Categories

1. The renewable appointments where part timers are contracted for a year;
2. Limited renewable appointments;
3. Folding chairs, which is typified as unequivocally terminal.

These groups of part timers seem to share certain similarities, some of which include a lack of academic freedom, protection and justness within the university they work for. They hold back from becoming too deeply invested, a problem that exemplifies the problematic nature of all classes of all part timing faculty (Shavers, 2000; AAUP 2003).

2.6 The Culture of Part-Timing

According to Hall in Grunlan and Mayers (2012) culture is the learned and shared attitudes, values and ways of behaving of people and their material artifacts. Elements like history, values, language and social organization mark a collection of people as a culture. According to Hierbert (1951), culture contributes to our personality. It is dynamic and carries tremendous significance in our professional engagement. A common characteristic of part timing faculties is that of taking on heavy workloads in various universities. Some do this with the hope that it will lead to full time employment in one of the universities where they teach while others will teach regularly without cutting lectures, beat deadlines in submission of draft exams and marking their scripts within the set deadlines with the hope that it will earn them tenure track positions. A big number view their part time teaching as their primary engagement, and the pay for them is essential. A story about faculty cobbling together a

portfolio of units at various universities stereotyped part-time faculty as “bicycle lecturers” or “*bodaboda lecturers*” (or otherwise commonly referred to as moonlighters) due to their characteristic style of shuttling between universities by use of the most viable means of transport. Thus, they would have limited time to conduct research or publish. Neither would they have adequate time update their teaching materials or apply new methods of teaching. The same foolscaps the content was initially scribbled on have now discolored, and have since been stereotyped as “yellow pages”. A new trend of teaching specialists has emerged. There have been various stories in the print media about part timing and the challenges it possess. Some print media reports have indicated that while there is an increase in enrolment for students needing higher education, the demand for part timing faculty has also risen. Incidentally, some part time faculty do not fully understand the requirements for full time employment while others lack a commitment toward publishing. Although the major responsibilities detailed in the job description for full time faculty is to teach, conduct research and contribute to knowledge, it is neither stated nor clarified in the part time appointments.

A new trend toward “teaching specialists” has emerged i.e. faculties who prefer teaching and are very good at it (Monks, 2007) and not interested in delving into research. Essentially this would mean teaching is their primary role by choice. “Teaching specialists” are passionate about teaching and working with students. However, they dilute the mandate of faculty as researchers, lecturers and publishers of peer reviewed content. They simply turn the “teaching specialists” into parasites sponging on the academic rigor of others.

2.7 Challenges Faced by Part-Time Lecturers

It is a reality that full time faculties are not promoted regardless of their excellence in teaching. They must also have been involved in research and scholarly activities with publications. For part timers, there is little evidence to support those who hope that their accomplishments as part timers will translate into full time faculty. Many a time part time positions are not usually converted to full time, and they will not receive any priority consideration during recruitment of new staff at interviews. Interestingly, when part time positions are converted to full time, the university advertises nationally. The teaching experience of part timing faculty members in the pool of local applicants may be interpreted as evidence of failed promise when measured against new PhDs who are just entering the market. Sadly, some part time faculty who continue to teach in an effort to sustain a professional life while seeking full time employment are bitterly disappointed to find the fact of working part time may be taken as a sign of academic barrenness or that they are not serious about their careers, especially in the lack of research and publications.

Most part timing faculty labor under conditions that hinder the professional quality of their work. Many are aware of the importance of research to landing a job but lack mentorship from fulltime faculty to collaborate with. Many part timing faculty are paid less (Ehrenberg and Zhang, 2005), often do not receive any benefits (CAW, 2012), are not usually represented in university governance (Baldwin and Chronister; AAUP, 2013) and for these reasons the relation between full time and part time faculty has been referred to as a faculty “caste system” (Gappa and Leslie, 1993) or stratification among faculty (Thompson, 2003) and the potential for stigmatization or disrespect of part timers (Barker and Chrisstensen, 1998; AAUP, 2013). Lack of faculty staffroom and basic tools of trade like white board markers, stationery and projectors is a common problem that plagues their effort to prepare course materials and conduct research. Some part timers lack access to library facilities due to the borrowing system requirements like use of the university identification card while others lack motivation due to the clear-cut distinction between full timers and part timers. This absence of incentives does not create conducive avenues for research.

Another characteristic of part time faculty is unpredictability of being hired. This is a likely stressor. Reevy and Deason (2014) conducted a research on the psychological stressors of part timing faculty and found out that most are hired one semester at a time. Further, part time faculty report that their major challenge is that which is related to financial security (e.g. delayed payments as universities unilaterally infringe on part time policy stipulated in the appointment letters (Reevy and Deason, 2014), and the service charters serving as a wall decoration. This absence of incentives or reward system for performance speaks bluntly to the marginal status of part timing faculty within these institutions and their disinterest in research.

To be off the tenure track in an institution that has a tenure system usually means being outside the structure of faculty governance and for part time faculty, outside the bargaining unit in those institutions where there are unions like Universities' Academic and Staff Union (UASU). This means part time faculties are not protected by collective bargaining. The university union contracts cover only full time faculty. This exclusion of part time faculty from the rewards system and the governance structure leaves part time faculty powerless and isolated. In any case, their attainments and abilities do not accrue toward promotions or full time positions; instead remain invisible within their service departments.

2.8 Benefits and Opportunities of Part-Time Teaching

The benefits of non-tenure track faculty are dualistic; to the part timers themselves and to the institutions. Part timing faculty often benefit from their work experience. According to Schuster and Finkelstein (2006); Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) full time faculty who are employed primarily outside the institution gain additional income,

personal enjoyment, and perhaps some prestige due to their association with the university or college. Lecturers who are employed full time may be considered for part time positions as they become available, though their appointment as such is not guaranteed (Brand (2002). Even without the chance for advancement, many part timers believe that their positions enable them to do what they love most: teach (Gappa, Austin, and Trice, 2007; Brand, 2002). Full time faculty contracted as part timers gain access to resources such as the library and other research facilities.

To the institutions, the primary benefit for all institutions is the vast economic benefit gained. All universities contracting part time faculty gain through salary savings (Benjamin, 2003; Brand, 2002; Cross and Goldenberg, 2002). Institutions enjoy flexibility in both hiring decisions (meaning whom they hire) and the duration of employment (online library.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.308/pdf Retrieved 27/7/14).

3. Research Methodology

This is a review paper and the methodology used was desktop research in which in-depth literature review was done to put emphasis on research amongst non-tenure-track faculty in universities. The analysis was based on research from relevant journals and articles.

4. Conclusion

Teaching and research are interlinked. There are development promotive factors that contribute to quality teaching and content delivery in the university education. As such, research is the one factor that holds and promotes the world of scholarship. The study concludes that universities need to enhance the opportunities for research amongst tenure track faculty and also unlock the opportunities for non-tenure-track in order to gain higher credibility, rating, recognition and promotion. This is an emerging professional paradigm that will enable universities to realize long growth.

A limitation of this study is the reliance on journals and articles from developed countries, specifically USA. Although these were the journals accessed to help the writer take a position, it is not necessarily true that all lecturers are not actively engaged in research at all. A second limitation is that the author of this paper based her observations on both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty at Maasai Mara University only.

5. Recommendations

While universities undertake to encourage their faculty to find long-term growth through research, the following measures deserve urgent consideration:

The common adage that lecturers should either publish or perish need to be emphasized to young scholars joining the professorial. The factors that determine their relevance in institutions of higher learning include research and publications. Thus, it is portentous for faculty to adopt the new trend of “teaching specialists”.

Given the benefits of research and publishing, the lecturers who have neither engaged in research nor published should be encouraged to do so. Obstacles in the way of researching and publishing should be removed through appropriate policies like the monies for part timing paid on time. There is need to emphasize on the review period for promotion given that research and publishing are an important consideration.

Part timing faculty need to collaborate with full time faculty to delve into research and publications that would enhance their employability, upward mobility and credibility. This would ease the high cost of publishing through cost-sharing.

That time is of essence is not questionable. Much time is required to invest in research to enable lecturers deliver quality education by limiting the weight of their course loads per semester.

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