

THE UTILIZATION OF PART-TIME FACULTY IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS: ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

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Abstract

The increasing utilization of part-time faculty in higher education is of major concern to many in the academe. Yet, one of the comments routinely tossed around business schools is that, unlike within the other areas of a university, little concern should be paid to the portion of part-time faculty utilized to teach undergraduate business courses because business adjuncts are different. The rationale behind this line of thought follows from the perception that, unlike within the other academic schools, those individuals who teach on a part-time basis in business are business professionals who bring “real-world” expertise to the classroom. These specially classified part-time faculty members then should not be viewed as a cost-saving effort on the part of the school to staff lower-division classes with lesser trained faculty, but rather, business adjunct faculty represent an astute attempt by business schools to staff the classrooms with talent that could not typically be afforded. How true is this assertion? Are the part-time faculty utilized by business schools somehow fundamentally different from those used in the other areas within a university? Using data from the 1999 NSOPF, the author makes that case that the part-time faculty utilized within a business school are different from those used elsewhere in that these faculty have more real-world experience. Thus, business adjuncts do bring more practical expertise to the classroom than their non-business counterparts.

I: Introduction

The increasing utilization of part-time faculty in higher education is of major concern to many in the academe. Recent data suggest that in 1997 42.5 percent of the professorate were employed part-time (Berger, 2002). In 1970, less than 22 percent of the instructional corps in higher education was employed in a part-time capacity. Clearly, the utilization of part-time faculty is increasing at an alarming rate, and this 25-year trend has serious implications for faculty work and institutional vitality.

Does the mere change in these proportions cause major concern to everyone? Should greater attention be focused simply on the number of part-time versus full-time faculty across a university? Or, should we only be concerned with the use of part-time faculty in particular courses of areas of the university?

One of the comments routinely tossed around business schools is that, unlike within the other areas of a university, little concern should be paid to the portion of part-time faculty utilized to teach undergraduate business courses. The rationale behind this line of thought follows from the perception that, unlike the part-time faculty used in the other academic schools, those individuals who teach on a part-time basis in business schools are primarily business professionals who bring “real-world” expertise to the classroom. These specially classified part-time faculty members, who are often referred to as adjunct faculty, should not be viewed as a cost-saving effort on the part of the school to staff lower-division classes with lesser

trained faculty. Rather, adjunct faculty are thought to represent an astute attempt by business schools to staff the classrooms with talent that could not typically be afforded.

How true is this assertion? Are the part-time faculty utilized by business schools somehow fundamentally different from those used in the other areas within a university? Using data from the 1999 NSOPF, the author makes the case that the part-time faculty utilized within a business school are somewhat different from those used elsewhere and that these faculty have more real world experience and are more satisfied with their jobs.

II. Current Knowledge

The starting point for understanding issues involving part-time faculty is the 1993 study The Invisible Faculty, by Judith Gappa and David Leslie. Subtitled, "improving the status of part-timers in higher education," the authors based their analysis on data from the 1988 National Study of Post-Secondary Faculty (NSOPF) and personal interviews conducted at 18 campuses across the country during the 1990-91 academic year. As the subtitle indicates, this study represented a call for change; to more fully understand and improve the plight of those described as "unrecognized, unrewarded, and invisible."

Many changes have taken place since Gappa and Leslie's initial call to action, not all of which may be viewed by academe as positive. First, the use of part-time faculty has continued to increase at a pace surpassing the employment growth among full-time tenure track faculty (NCES, 1999). Furthermore, institutions are finding more and varied ways to justify the reliance on part-timers. The roles and responsibilities once the sole purview of the full-time faculty, including academic advising, remedial instruction, committee

assignments, and curriculum development are increasingly being assigned to part-time and temporary faculty.

Concerns about the usage level of part-time faculty led, in September, 1997, 10 academic associations to hold perhaps the first major joint conference on the Growing Use of Part-time and Adjunct Faculty (AAUP, 1997). The resulting joint policy statement called for limitations on the usage of part-time faculty and issued an appeal for dramatic increases in the number of new tenure-track openings.

That same year, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation supported a conference on the increasing use of part-time and adjunct faculty. David Leslie, in writing the conference report, coined a new phrase when he posited that part-time and adjunct faculty constituted "a new majority" on America's college campuses (Leslie, 1998). To reach this conclusion, Leslie grouped full-time but temporary faculty members with part-timers. By adding individuals not eligible for tenure with part-time and adjunct faculty, Leslie arrives at a combined total of 57 percent. The heavy use of graduate teaching assistants pushes this percentage even higher.

The vast majority of the existing research on the subject has concentrated on the number of part-time faculty, their qualifications, and their job market goals and motivations. In considering the principle findings of these various studies and reports, it is clear that, regardless of how one measures or defines part-time faculty, higher education is using more part-time and temporary faculty than full-time faculty to educate students. Yet, little has been done to explore the use of part-time faculty across the various schools within a university.

There is a void in the literature concerning where part-time faculty are being utilized. Most of the existing literature seems to assume all part-time

faculty are the same and that it is common knowledge where they are used. In a recent national study, issues of where part-time faculty are being utilized was studied. It was found that institutions most frequently use part-time and adjunct faculty in lower level undergraduate courses, particularly survey courses. Especially heavy part-time utilization was found in the disciplines of English Literature and Writing, and Mathematics (Reid, et. al, 1999). While this information supported the commonly held assumptions concerning part-time faculty usage, know information is available concerning broad part-time faculty utilization across universities.

III. Basic Data Analysis

Data for this study were drawn from the 1998-1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF99), developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics. The NSOPF99 data provides a detailed profile of U.S. faculty in higher education institutions. The final sample includes information on 18,043 faculty spread across 960 institutions. For this study, a sub-sample of 1,341 faculty teaching in Schools of Business was utilized. Faculty fields were determined based on the listed primary field of teaching¹. Table 1 presents the discipline breakdown of the final study sample by faculty status (i.e, full-time v. part-time). Part-time faculty represent 29.1% of this sample (i.e., 390 part-time faculty members).

Table 2 illustrates that the proportions of part-time faculty in the business sample was almost identical to those found in the full NSOPF99 (excluding business disciplines).

¹ To allow for some possible variation in the definition of business disciplines, faculty who listed economics as their primary teaching discipline were included in the sample.

Overall, it does not appear that business schools utilization of part-time faculty is any different (proportionately) that higher education overall.

IV. Comparison of Business and Non-Business Part-time Faculty

The primary focus of this paper is on whether or not the part-time faculty utilized within business schools are fundamentally different from those used in other areas of universities. Of the 5,288 part-time faculty taken from the NSOPF99, 390 taught business courses (leaving 4,898 non-business part-time faculty).

Table 3 presents some basic quantitative information on part-time faculty. The proportion of part-time faculty in business schools who are male is significantly higher than in non-business disciplines. Business part-time faculty are also more likely to be married, and do outside consulting. However, part-time faculty outside business schools are more likely to hold the Ph.D. degree of equivalent, and make teaching part-time their primary source of employment. Thus, a non-business part-time faculty member is more likely to be a single female who uses teaching as their primary source of employment. Business part-time faculty were no more likely to be white, US citizens, tenured, or unionized than their non-business counterparts.

Table 4 illustrates that business part-time faculty are older individuals who tend to have fewer juried publications, but have more work experience than their non-business counterparts. However, there is no difference between the longevity in higher education or their current position. Also, both business and non-business part-time faculty tend to teach 2.50 classes per semester.

Table 5 reveals that business part-time faculty are more satisfied with their workload on the job and with their overall part-time teaching job. However, business part-time faculty are no more satisfied with their undergraduate students, their salary, and their benefits than their non-business counterparts.

Summary

Part-time faculty in business do have some significant differences from their non-business counterparts. Adjuncts in business are more likely older, male, married, and more experienced outside higher education both currently through consulting activities and in the past with work experiences. Business part-timers are also far less likely to find their part-time teaching to be their primary source of employment. Thus, the rationale behind the thinking that, unlike within the other academic schools, those individuals who teach on a part-time basis in business are business professionals who bring “real-world” expertise to the classroom appears to be based in fact. These specially classified part-time faculty members in business schools then should not be viewed as a cost-saving effort on the part of the school to staff lower-division classes with lesser trained faculty, but rather, business adjunct faculty represent an astute attempt by business schools to staff the classrooms with experienced talented teachers. Business adjunct faculty members do seem to bring more practical expertise to the classroom than their non-business counterparts.

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Table 1 -- Principal Field of Teaching

		Employed P/T or F/T		Total
		Part-time	Full-time	
Principal field of teaching	Accounting	85	193	278
	Banking and Finance	31	91	122
	Business Administration and Management	119	214	333
	Human Resources Development	13	18	31
	Organizational Behavior	14	38	52
	Marketing and Distribution	33	110	143
	Other Business *	52	94	146
	Economics	43	193	236
Total		390	951	1341

* Other Business option includes Business Education, Office Management, and Bookkeeping

Table 2 - Percent Employed Part-Time or Full-Time

		NSOPF99 Frequency	NSOPF99 Percent	Business Sample Frequency	Business Sample Percent
Valid	Part-time	5288	29.3	390	29.1
	Full-time	12755	70.7	951	70.9
	Total	18043	100.0	1341	100.0

Table 3 - Qualitative Information

Characteristic		Non Business	Non Business Percent	Business	Business Percent	t-stats
Gender	Male	2421	49.4	269	69.0	-7.469**
Ethnicity	White	4305	87.9	345	88.5	0.332
Married	Yes	3519	71.8	310	79.5	-3.252**
US Citizen	Yes	4708	96.1	379	96.1	-0.004
Tenure or tenure track	Yes	284	5.8	20	5.1	0.547
Degree	Ph.D.*	921	19.2	59	15.1	1.929*
Union	Not Eligible	721	14.7	46	11.8	1.760
Outside Consulting	Yes	1619	33.1	172	44.1	-4.444**
PT Teaching Primary Employment	Yes	1704	34.8	77	19.7	6.071**
Sample Size		4898		390		

* Ph.D. or other accepted doctoral degree.

Table 4 - Quantitative Information

Characteristic	Non Business Mean	Business Mean	t-stat
Age	48.22	50.10	-3.137**
Years in Current Position	6.76	7.09	-0.853
Career Juried Works	4.38	2.31	2.260**
Classes Taught (per semester)	2.48	2.51	-0.199
Years Teaching in Higher Ed.	10.19	11.09	-1.804
Position Held Outside Higher Ed.	2.38	3.30	-7.049**

Table 5 - Satisfaction Measures

Satisfied or Very Satisfied with	Non Business	Non Business Percent	Business	Business Percent	t-stats
Undergraduate Students	3315	75.7	272	76.2	-0.207
Work Load	4094	83.6	349	89.5	-3.064**
Salary	2610	53.3	226	57.9	-1.777
Benefits	2294	46.8	202	51.8	-1.888
Overall Job	4146	84.6	346	88.7	-2.164*
Sample Size	4898		390		