

# ASSOCIATE FACULTY IN THE EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN KENYA: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Since the sporadic proliferation of universities in Kenya, university education has embraced a common cost-cutting measure which has impacted on the employment of the teaching resource, namely the contracting of part-time lecturers. The solid argument in the justification of these measures has been hinged on the fact that there has been lowered funding from the government for public universities. For private universities, it has been argued that it is an effective means of minimizing costs. The big questions therefore are, in which ways have the part time lecturers contributed to development of higher learning in universities? What challenges have the part-time lecturers faced under this new approach? How have the recipients of higher education been affected by this arrangement? Based on this, the overall question is what can be done to improve the effectiveness of this arrangement? Data will be collected from a sample size of 250. Out of these, 100 will be part-time lecturers in both public and private universities and the other 150 respondents will be students. They will be asked about the challenges they face and their suggestions on what can be done to improve the quality of higher learning. The study will be beneficial not only to the policy makers at the higher education level, but also the management and stakeholders in the running of universities.*

**Key words:** associate faculty, par-time lecturers, challenges, contributions

## **BACKGROUND**

It is an acceptable fact that part-time lecturers, or associate faculty, are commonly been contracted in teaching in the various public and private universities as a cost-cutting strategy in the academic environment. In Kenya, as well as in other developing countries, their use has

been attributed to, as Muralindharan and Sundaraman (2008) aver, the increasing size and diversity of student enrollment. In fact, as Bryson (1998) reports, part-time lecturers are probably as many if not more than full time staff. In USIU, as Gudo (2010) reports, that there were 349 part-time and 89 full time lecturers as at 2014. This coincides with what Mageto (2001) and Mwiria (2007) had earlier on stated that half, if not more of the lecturers are part-time. The fact is the figure of part-time lecturers is much more than full time lecturers in institutions of higher learning. Surprisingly, most of these lecturers in private universities are drawn from public universities, while those in public universities are drawn from some private universities.

It should be noted with concern that in spite of the fact that part-time lecturers do the same, if not more teaching work compared to their full-time colleagues, they do not enjoy the same status as them. According to Bryson (1998), part-time lecturers are mistreated by their employers. This happens both formally and informally. For example, the formal contract of work is designed in such a way that it gives the institution an advantage without the labour rights of the worker being considered. Most of these contracts are usually based on a 'Take-it-or-leave-it' basis and in case the lecturer decides to take it, then he/she is under the sole mercy of the university. In fact, Kyule et.al (2013) rightly notes that these contracts are only designed to act as shock absorbers to the institutions which, since the increase in student population, are unable to manage with full-time lecturers alone. In the end, the lecturers are informally viewed as 'disposable faculty'. The part time lecturer's duties are usually expanded in the contracts under the umbrella of the 'legality' of the contracts. One of the terms of the contract in one university reads 'The University may terminate this appointment without notice should your performance and conduct found to be unsatisfactory. This of course leaves room for interpretation to suit the whimsical interests of the employer and deny the lecturer a fair hearing as it should be as per the new constitution. In short, there is no job security for the part-time lecturer. The Sessional Paper no- 14 of 2013 on Reforming Education and training sectors in Kenya, despite stating that deliberate policies must be developed and implemented to ensure adequate quantity and quality of human resource is available in universities, does not mention even a word on part-time lecturers.

Consequently, the question in the hearts and minds of scholars worth their salt is what are the effects of the use of part-time lecturers in expanding access to higher education? Unfortunately, as O'Hara (1999) reports, many universities which adopt this cost-cutting strategy negate the impacts it has on quality of higher education. According to Gerlich and Sallosy (2001), associate faculty, even by definition alone, do not have the mission of the college or university at heart. At the same time, as Gudo (2011) notes, the demand for increased admission without expanding the universities' resource base is a precursor to a significant further decline in the quality of education in higher institutions. Some of the impacts include low retention capacity of lecturers, their utilization and hence their productivity. However, the greatest challenge is shouldered by the students who happen to be the ultimate recipients of university education.

In America, as Scheuz (2002) reports, part-time lecturers have less total teaching experience;

teach less hours per week, fewer interactions with students, and by extension their peers and less preparation for teaching. In Kenya, this is further confirmed by Kyule (2014) when he discovered that 75% of the part-time lecturers in a study indicated that they were rarely available for consultation. This proves that the students were hardest hit. To compound the issue, it was also discovered that only 4% of these lecturers registered high job satisfaction while 85% registered a low job satisfaction rate. This come in the wake of the government plans to increase Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) from 3% to 10% (190,000-600,000) students by 2022. Therefore, the question is how cheap is the cheap labor? Is the cheap labor argument in the final end expensive as relates quality of higher education?

## METHODOLOGY

This research paper used a survey design. The survey covered both respondents from public as well as private universities. Purposive sampling was utilized in which the target population was both part-time lecturers and the students. A total of 250 respondents were interviewed. Out of these, 150 were students who are taught by part-time lecturers and the remaining 100 were part-time lecturers in both private and public universities. Specifically, the extreme case sampling was employed in order to elicit accurate data from the lecturers, who in this case are part-timers. The students were targeted using snowball sampling in which questionnaires were administered to those who were taught by part-time lecturers. Analysis for the paper was done with the aid of percentages, tables and charts.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### PART-TIME LECTURERS

The respondents were drawn from both public and private universities. Out of the sample of 100, 50% came from private universities while another 50% from public universities. The respondents were then asked how frequently they spend time with their students per week as shown in the table below:

**How much time do you spend with your students per week?**

Once	100	100%
Twice	00	00%
Thrice	00	00%
More	00	00%

Spending more time with students (contact hours) increases the level of inquiry and intellectual interaction between students and lecturers. Such interactions help in building knowledge on the content taught in class and its applicability outside the classroom since some pertinent matters

arising from the content can be clarified by the lecturer. According to the table, the lecturers only met with the students once per week probably when there is a class and no other time to discuss anything outside the classroom until the following week as indicated by the 100% responses.

#### How frequent do you do the following?

ITEM	NEVER	FREQUENTLY	RARELY
Get a chance to attend seminars	100	-	
Get grants to pursue further education	100	-	-
Get funding to undertake research	100	-	-

It is believed that staff development especially at institutions of higher level should be aimed at mentoring prolific researchers and also people who are well informed. This can be done through facilitating the lecturers to undertake research and also enabling them attend seminars and conferences where ideas are disseminated. From the responses, 100% indicated that they have never been given a chance to attend seminars on behalf of the university. Another 100% indicated that they have never received grants to pursue higher education while 100% indicated that they have never received funding to undertake research. This shows that the part-time lecturers are not facilitated to undergo upward intellectual mobility by the institutions where they teach.

At table 4, the respondents were asked to state whether the contracts that they sign are good.

#### How good are the contracts that you sign with the universities?

GOOD	AVERAGE	NOT GOOD
00	25%	75%

From the responses as indicated in the table 5, it is clear that a majority of the part-time lecturers were not impressed with the contracts that they sign with the universities. This shows that the lecturers are not so much into the work that they are doing. Asked whether there is anything that can be done to improve the contracts, all of them, 100% indicated in the affirmative. At the same time, the lecturers reported that they did not have a union to represent their needs and labour issues. As to what should be done to improve their terms, 50% of the respondents indicated that there should be a union to represent them and where their labour rights could be well articulated because as things currently stand they are at the mercy of the

institutions where they work. Another 25% stated that there should be an acceptable bargained package that should cater for part-time lecturers to enable them get motivated. The remaining 25% indicated that the universities should be sensitive to the demands of the associate faculty and restitutive measures are in place in case contracts are dishonored by the institutions.

## STUDENTS

The respondents were drawn from both the public (50%) and private (50%) universities. The respondents were asked whether they are taught by part-time lecturers, out of the 150, 112 (74.6%) did indicate in the affirmative while 38 (25%) indicated in the negative. This shows that part-time lecturers play a pivotal role in teaching at the universities. The respondents were then asked whether the lecturers were available for consultations as indicated in the table below.

### How available are the part-time lecturers for consultation?

ALWAYS	%	RARELY	%	NEVER	%
32	21	96	64	16	10.6

From the table, it is clear that the part-time lecturers do not have adequate time with the students hence it is difficult for students to benefit from their counsel. At higher institutions, the lecturer is supposed to be available in order to mentor the students into desirable intellectuals.

Students' assessment forms the basis of evaluating content coverage and comprehension. This is done through CATS, Term papers and or discussions. In the table below, the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency they do the following.

### How frequently do you do the following?

ITEM	VERY OFTEN		NOT VERY OFTEN		NEVER	
	NUM	%	NUM	%	NUM	%
Sit for CATS	64	42	80	53	00	00
Write term Papers	80	53.3	48	32	00	00
Hold discussions	64	42	32	21	16	10.6

The respondents indicated that they do not sit very frequently for the CATS 80 (53.3%) while 64 (42%) indicated that they sit for them frequently. However, a significant percentage 53.3%

also indicated that they frequently write term papers, probably because of convenience they have for both students and lecturers. Furthermore, 42% indicated that they hold discussions frequently.

However, 10.6% stated that they have never held any discussions in class.

As to whether there are any challenges that they experience as a result of being taught by part-time lecturers, 64% indicated in the affirmative while 32% in the negative. Some of the challenges that were cited included: unavailability of lecturers for consultations (32%), difficulties in the lecturers fitting in the timetable forcing inconveniencing changes to the students (10%), and lack of adequate commitment as seen in lesson coverage and attendance, (10%), lack of comprehensive notes, (30%) and failure to return CAT papers (8%).

Asked whether there is anything that should be done to improve the quality of teaching at the university with regards to part-time lecturers, 96 (64%) indicated in the affirmative while 32% in the negative. Asked about what should be done, the respondents alluded that universities should come up with a clear policy regarding lesson attendance by part-time lecturers and submission of marks. Others indicated that the lecturers should be paid on time to enable them to attend to them more frequently. Some respondents indicated that there is dire need to absorb the entire part-time faculty into full time so that they can be able to attend to them fully. Lastly, it was indicated that the lecturers' inefficiency stems from poor motivation and that should be the beginning point towards enhancing performance.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been established that indeed associate faculty play a crucial role in teaching at higher educational institutions. It has also been established that both the lecturers and students experience challenges in the pursuit of higher education. This in effect has had a bearing on the expansion of higher education in Kenya. Therefore, the findings of this research could be used to improve the quality of higher education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Part-time lecturers should form a trade union which will collectively bargain for their remuneration
2. Universities should have an attractive remuneration package for part-time lecturers should be all encompassing rather than lopsided
3. There should be restitutive measures that will cushion part-time lecturers against illegal working practices from the universities
4. Students should be allowed to have more contact hours with part-time lecturers

Universities in Kenya should borrow best practices from other universities outside the country with regards to part-time lecturer's treatment.

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