Part-time lecturers teaching part-time learners at university: A transformation issue

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Abstract
The relationship between the academic labour market and the global labour market provides an important context for this research. There appear to be growing numbers of part-time lecturers at universities worldwide, which is seen as an extension of casualisation of labour more generally. From a social justice perspective, it is therefore of concern that more is not known about part-time employed academics in South African higher education.

Through utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods the research presents a preliminary picture of a peripheral group of academics at one university who are teaching an equally peripheral but sizable group of adult learners. The peripheral status of the part-time lecturers is further exacerbated by the poor data sources available and the limited knowledge of who they are and what they contribute to the teaching and learning of part-time students. This research brings into view both the largely invisible part-time lecturers and part-time students in the hope that this can lead to equitable and ethical actions by higher education authorities, and so transform the culture of the institutions to reflect the realities of growing numbers of both part-time students and staff.

INTRODUCTION
Over the last 10 years the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) at the University of Western Cape (UWC) has undertaken research in order to understand more deeply the experiences of adult and part-time learners at universities in South Africa, (Walters 2005; February and Koetsier 2007; 2009). Adult and part-time learners make up over 50 per cent of the student population within higher education in South Africa (Buehler, Castle, Osman and Walters 2007). However, this is barely acknowledged in higher education policy and practice as the picture that holds universities captive is that the majority of the students are young and full time. The higher education
institutions are not structured and managed, for the most part, in the best interests of adult and part-time learners.

The research that we have undertaken has, to date, placed the adult students at the centre. However, increasingly we realize how little the institution knows about who teaches these students during after-hours classes and what these lecturers’ experiences and insights are in relation to provision of quality teaching and learning. Global trends towards the casualisation of academic staff, and its possible impact on teaching and learning at UWC, have significantly informed the DLL’s most recent research.

The specific objectives of this research therefore are to establish who the lecturers are in UWC’s after-hours programmes, how many of them are part-time, why this is so, and to examine what impact this may, or may not, have on the quality of the teaching in the after-hours programme. Currently, the after-hours provision is decentralized through the faculties. This research provides a snapshot in 2008 of the University’s teaching practices and provision on its after-hours programmes and it makes recommendations to improve the situation for part-time lecturers and students.

**METHODOLOGY**

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used. Quantitative data was collected from May 2008, and the research team drew on the University’s Human Resources (HR) database as well as the information systems in Faculties. Qualitative data was collected over a nine-month period, in three phases. Faculties were unevenly responsive to the research team’s call for research information. Understandably, those faculties with the highest concentration of part-time students were the most responsive. Therefore, the after-hours provision experiences are drawn from four faculties i.e. Arts, Economics and Management Sciences (EMS), Law and Education.

Interview data was derived from a cross section of the University’s academic and management staff who had varying combinations of current experience and responsibility regarding after-hours provision at the University. All interviewees had personal experience of after-hours teaching and were either currently employed on a part-time basis by the University, or had been employed in this way at some stage of their working lives at the University.

Research data was derived from twenty eight University-employed staff, and this data includes designated workshop participants at a consultative workshop on after-hours provision held by the DLL in January 2009. The twenty eight respondents were not all interviewed in the same way during the two main phases of the research project. In the first phase, thirteen respondents were selected from the faculties of Arts (4), EMS (4), and Law (5), and were interviewed according to a generic interview guide. In the first phase two preliminary meetings were held with senior members of staff in the faculties of Education (1) and Dentistry (1).

In the second phase, the emerging picture of data gathered in the first phase was discussed with four senior staff in the University, some of whom carry executive
portfolios in the areas of teaching and learning, and others who hold senior positions in two faculties. Their views were invited about possible institutional responses and solutions to some of the challenges raised regarding after-hours provision.

In the third phase, preliminary findings were discussed with a group of participants who attended the DLL’s after-hours consultative workshop in January 2009. An interview was also conducted with two graduate learning assistants in this phase.

The research team was not successful in interviewing academic staff who were both part-time employed academic staff and teaching on the after-hours programmes. They were either one or the other. While this may appear at first to be a serious flaw in the research, it in fact goes to the heart of the matter: that so little information about this category of lecturer is formalized, and therefore obtainable, within the institution currently.

Research purpose and focus
Specific purposes of the research were, firstly, to establish baseline information about whom the part-time employed lecturers are who are also teaching on the after-hours programmes at the University. The second purpose was to establish whether there are quality issues in relation to teaching and learning on these programmes.

Our research was therefore operationalised around these two specific research purposes, and specific subsets of questions in these areas informed the interview guide (February et al. 2009). The research team identified two focal areas of the research. The first focal area was the part-time employed academic staff with delegated responsibility and experience (past and/or present) regarding after-hours teaching. A second focal area was members of staff who have the designated oversight responsibility for after-hours provision.

Of the two research approaches employed, our research approach in the first phase mainly approximated the survey model in that large scale numerical data of the University was acquired to gain an initial overview of the entire part-time employed teaching population of the University. This data enabled the research team to narrow the focus of the study to part-time employed lecturers who were also teaching after hours.

In the second phase, the research approach drew on case study methodology where in-depth, detailed qualitative data was obtained from relatively few respondents with the view to learning from each particular case, and to draw on their respective faculty experiences as regards part-time employment and after-hours provision.

Validity, reliability and research ethics
Research ethics clearance was obtained by the University in May 2008. Validity and reliability were addressed in two main ways. After each interview, a summary of the interviewers’ research notes was sent to the respondents, and feedback was invited as to whether there was anything further to add, or whether they needed to
notify the researchers of omissions and inaccuracies in the text. Five respondents sent comments and these were incorporated. Confidentiality was assured.

**Methodological challenges**

For quantitative data, the research team relied heavily on the University’s personnel database located at Human Resources (HR) and the UWC management information system. This had implications for the usage of the core terminology in the presentation of data. The HR database makes provision for academics that are either full-time or part-time employed. This includes lecturing staff as well as research staff and academic support staff. In the calculations needed for this research project, information was triangulated with faculty-based personnel lists, and the focus was on academics with teaching responsibilities thereby taking the categories of the HR database as point of departure.

Numerical data obtained from HR and from Faculties regarding part-time lecturing staff were sometimes significantly discrepant, and this necessitated a painstaking validation of some of the figures. It transpired that some academic categories were not included on the HR data bases, such as tutoring staff, including the Graduate Lecturing Assistants (GLAs), who have short (10-month) fixed term contracts as work study assistants. The official number of part-time appointed academics in the HR database, at the time of this research enquiry, was totalled at only seventy-five. Therefore, current institutional information at the time did not include all possible categories of ‘academic staff’ in the ‘main frame’ categories thus excluding a substantial group. HR indicated that they planned revising the database by including these groups.

The current status of the HR database is a serious limitation of the study where we hoped to present as comprehensive a picture as possible of who the part-time staff is teaching on the after-hours programme. The challenges of obtaining the quantitative data highlight graphically how invisible the academic staff is who teach in the after-hours programme, particularly those who are also part-time.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The literature that most usefully serves the purposes of the study is drawn in large measure from the United Kingdom and North America, particularly in relation to relevant large-scale surveys. We were unable to find useful literature from other middle income countries like our own. Literature on the South African experience of part-time employed academic staff in higher education appears minimal.

The following questions drawn from the literature provide a useful contextual background regarding part-time employed academic staff:

- Who are they, and why do they work part-time?
- What are their University conditions of employment?
- What is their experience of teaching part-time and after-hours?
- What is their experience of the University’s quality arrangements?
Part-time employed academic staff: who are they and why do they work part-time?

The literature suggests that the nature of part-time academic work is an extension of casualisation of labour more generally in the epoch of globalisation. This relationship between the academic labour market and the global labour market provides an important context for this research. As confirmed by Kuchera and Miller (1988, 240):

The current situation in the academic labour market is simply an extension of the conditions that have prevailed in other labour markets.

Drawing on the work of contemporary scholars, Puplampu (2004, 175) supports this view, with the following observation:

It is significant to note that part-time instructors are not novel occurrences in the academy. … What is unique about the current crop of part-timers is their growing numbers, relative permanence in the academy and the heavy reliance on them by universities and colleges. These trends are consistent with the post-fordist feature of having workers on the bottom with low status, no benefits, and little job security. (Tirelli 1998, 185. See also Mysyk 2001.)

The literature also suggests that academic staff is employed on a part-time basis for a range of different reasons, (Kuchera and Miller 1988). A recent study of academics on non-standard contracts in universities in the United Kingdom produced a typical profile of a ‘non-standard academic’, or NSA, based on their data received:

The “typical” NSA who emerges from this profile is, then, a white, middle-aged woman in good health with a master’s degree who has at least one other paid position. She has a working partner but no dependents living at home. (Brown and Gold 2007, 444).

Brown and Gold (2007) also distinguish between a ‘portfolio worker’, who has a high level of qualifications, multiple jobs and sense of independence, and a ‘casual worker’, who can be described as ‘non-established staff” on a fixed term contract and insecure working conditions.

Part-time employed academics therefore have various motivations for doing the work, from little other economic option, to seeing it as a developmental position which may lead to more permanent employment, to those who choose to work in this way because of the flexibility it offers.

The literature suggests that there is little research at present on the employment of part-time academic staff in South African higher education institutions. The recent study by Schulz (2006) included academics employed on a part-time basis as part of the sample in an investigation into job satisfaction of academics at two South African higher education institutions. However, the results of the study do not distinguish part-time employed academics as a group.

Gappa (1984) observes some unfair treatment of part-time teaching staff and argues in support of institutional centralization to ensure fair conditions of employment for part-time teaching staff. He draws on the following scholars to support his observations of some unfairness in treatment:
Institutional policies and practices should take into account the differences amongst part-time faculty in their qualifications, the functions they perform, and their contributions to the school’s educational objectives. Institutions should replace freewheeling departmental autonomy with centralized responsibility and accountability for part-time faculty employment to ensure fair and humane treatment (Leslie, Kellams and Gunne 1982).

Part-time academic staff experiences of teaching part-time and after-hours

A related matter highlighted in the literature is the lack of professional development and induction of part-time employed lecturing staff. Also the lack of research into their experiences is highlighted. This is paradoxical at a time when there is an expansion of the number of part-time teachers in higher education and a corresponding call worldwide for the improvement of teaching and learning within higher education institutions. Accordingly, Knight et al. point out in their 2007 study that higher education in the UK has seen a steady increase in the numbers of part-time teachers, ‘yet the way in which they are inducted into teaching and the utilisation of their expertise are under-researched’, (Knight, Baume, Tait and Yorke 2007, 420).

Part-time academic staff experiences of the University’s quality assurance arrangements

An important research consideration is the casualisation of labour as a trend in higher education and academic work. Accordingly, we sought to understand how casualisation of labour may have impacted on the general quality of teaching and learning, and on teaching in the after-hours2 programmes at the University of the Western Cape, in particular. However, one of the limits of the study was that we were only able to capture ‘one point in time’ rather than obtain trends in employment patterns over a number of years. We are therefore unable to comment on whether ‘casualisation’ of academic labour is a feature of life at the university.

The literature suggests that there are divergent views on whether or not good teaching is compromised by the employment of academic staff on a part-time basis. In this regard, two views from the literature are noted:

The controversy surrounding the utilisation of part-time faculty stems, in part, from the national concern about the overall quality of teaching occurring in postsecondary education. . . . Paradoxically, very little empirical evidence has been amassed to substantiate the contention that part-time faculty have a negative impact on educational quality (Pisani and Stott 1998, 121--122).

And:

The argument that part-time instructors might be excellent or good teachers needs to be theorized. There are so many variables that determine some being a good teacher and being underpaid is not one. However, for part-time instructors,
what students say about their teaching, by way of end term evaluations . . ., could
determine whether or not they are offered a job in another year. Consequently, they
have to be available to their students, and motivate themselves and their students.
(Puplampu 2004, 176).

In our research, the research team assumed that there may be a tendency
towards greater use of part-time staff particularly on the after-hours programmes,
and we sought to understand whether or not this kind of employment arrangement in
the institution was having a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The research team had set out to establish institutional information in respect of the
following three questions:

- Who are the part-time employed lecturers at the University?
- Who are the part-time employed lecturers who teach on the after-hours
  programmes?
- Are there significant quality assurance concerns as regards after-hours provision?

In a significant sense, this research is able to provide a basic picture of part-
time employed lecturers at the University, and does contribute towards baseline
information of the spread of those who teach on the after-hours programmes.

With regard to the quality of provision on after-hours programmes, this research
has not been able to provide conclusive information but interview data has revealed
rich insights into the complexities of quality assuring after-hours provision.

We also know something about the spread and type of contracts part-time
employed lecturing staff are on. We do not have an established sense of the number
of part-time employed lecturing staff in each faculty. We also have some idea of the
working conditions of part-time employed lecturing staff. This research has also
yielded some insight into the key motivators for part-time employed lecturing staff
choosing to work in this way.

Institutional data

The first kind of data to be obtained was institutional data for academic staff
requested and obtained from the HR database per 2008/06/24. This information
was supplemented by Faculty information as the HR database does not contain any
information about after-hours teaching. (There is more detailed data presented in the

Who are the after-hours students?

The lecturers interviewed in this study all had experience with teaching students
during after-hours. They described their students invariably as part-time students,
although they were aware that increasingly full-time students were attending the
after-hours classes.

There is a high correlation between being a part-time student and studying during
after-hours. An evaluation of the after-hours booking statistics of 2008 however shows that up to 30.4 per cent of the classes during after hours are listed as ‘full-time’. This emphasizes the confusion that exists in the naming of courses as ‘part-time’ or ‘full-time’, and the ambiguity around this continues although the staff of the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) have highlighted this on numerous occasions i.e. that it is the students NOT the courses that are full or part-time.

The after-hours teaching programmes are offered from Monday to Friday between 16:30–21:00, on weekends and during dedicated block periods in academic holidays. In this study we mainly concentrate on staff who teaches during the week.

The statistics presented in Figure 1 provide a basic picture of the student population that is served during after hours.

**A profile in numbers (2008 statistics)**

Figure 1: Profile of part-time students in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part-time students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 69.6% of the after hours teaching slots are listed as ‘part-time classes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 18.0% of all students at UWC (N=2768) are part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 41.3% of all post graduate students are part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 80.0% of Part-time students are 30+ years old</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Gender balance**

| Males | 43.5% |
| Females | 56.5% |

*Source: UWC Management Information System 2008/06/24*

The HR personnel database provides an elaborate set of data concerning employment status, age, and faculty distribution, service ranks divided over 14 employment categories, gender, and qualification. The following figures have been extracted from the HR Excel data file.

Figure 2 shows the employment status of academics at UWC. Only 9.9 per cent (N=75) of all academics are part-time employed.

Figure 2: Employment status: Full-time/part-time academic staff (N=758)

Source: HR database 2008/06/24
The single biggest appointment category is full-time permanent staff (N=405). They form 53.4 per cent of all staff in the HR personnel database. 32.8 per cent (N=262) are full-time contracts of less than 2 years to 5 years. The remaining 13.8 per cent (N=91) is not specified. The part-time staff is part of the category ‘not-specified’. Of the 75 part-time employed staff, 42 (56%) are male and 33 (44%) are female.

The bulk of the part-time appointed academic staff is appointed in the category lecturers (N=45 or 60%). Only a few part-time academics have been appointed in senior positions. There are 2 senior lecturers, 2 extraordinary associate professors and 1 full professor.

The average age of full time academics is 45.7 years old (N=683) and of part-time employed academics 46.5 years old (N=75). The overall age range for full-time academics is between 22.9 and 75.7 years old and for part-time employed academics between 24.5 and 73.8 years old.

The emerging profile of academics teaching during after hours

One of the aims of this research is to construct a profile of academic staff teaching during the after-hours. Our main source of information about academic staff per faculty and unit was the HR database of 24 June 2008. This database however does not contain any information about who is teaching during after-hours. It only shows whether an academic is employed part-time or full-time, is permanent or on contract. The system lists these under 14 categories of established posts.

The researchers thus had to request additional information from the Faculties about teaching during after-hours. The received information is still of a general nature and does not cover all departments of the faculties concerned. The lists only show whether a person is teaching during after-hours and/or during the day. No distinction is made between teaching during the week on Monday to Friday, or on weekends or in block teaching. The EMS faculty provided the most complete set of data and it serves as a first probe of the data, illustrating the complexity of constructing a profile of those teaching during after-hours.

On the basis of the incomplete information from the various faculties, units and departments the question of who teaches on the after-hours programme cannot be answered with any accuracy. The information from the EMS faculty, Law Faculty and Education Faculty suggests that most academics teaching during after-hours also teach during the day and are regular full-time staff. However, we are not firmly convinced of this as it requires further probing.

The overall conclusion is that both the HR and faculty systems are insufficiently aligned with reference to our study. If unaddressed, this can lead to extreme situations, as reported by one of the interviewees who said that one Head of Department did not seem ‘to know who is teaching on the after-hours programme’, and it is likely that the colleague concerned ‘did not think s/he was captured on any personnel database’.
Interview data

Four main reasons were offered among respondents when asked: ‘why did you take this job?’ The majority are seeking permanent employment.

Seeking permanency: Four out of ten respondents expressed the desire to be employed on a permanent basis at the University, and hoped that securing a part-time position would eventually lead to permanency in their respective faculties.

Foreign staff: Two respondents, who were also foreign members of staff, indicated that their foreign status prevented them from obtaining a permanent position in South Africa.

Complements private practice work: One respondent expressed complete satisfaction with the part-time employment arrangement, and explained that the part-time arrangement at the University was flexible and accommodating in terms of the private practice responsibilities this person also had.

Less stressful: Part-time employment was perceived to be less stressful than fulltime employment as it provided an opportunity for flexible work arrangements. This was the view of one respondent.

Their after-hours teaching experiences, either as former or current part-time employed academic staff, revealed the following main insights:

Part-time students challenge their lecturers more than fulltime students; part-time lecturers find themselves needing to do a lot of counseling of students, and here the suggestion is put forward for a dedicated mentoring person in each of the faculties to take on this role;

It is important for ‘part-time students to have some iconic place to gather’, and to have a place that is appropriate for mature students as well;

It would be helpful ‘to develop a community of practice of after–hours practitioners’ for both ‘cognitive induction as well as just a meeting place of after–hours practitioners’.

There is varied interaction with after-hours students, as stated by respondents:

“I do have consultation times, and many come by. I’m usually here before class in the afternoon. . . . The nature of formal contact is quite varied.”

“I have contact on an ad-hoc basis or an hour before the lecture.”

“I have given them my mobile number. . . . Not sure whether the internet chat facilities here work well. At home [. . . edited . . . name of African country] we have blogs. . . . I have an open door policy. The nature of my interaction with students is mainly course-related.”

“I give part-time students all my numbers; they have the right to call me at any time. . . . They can make an appointment or phone. I have consultations on Mondays for students from 5--7pm. They can also come during their lunch hour but [by] prior arrangement.”

“They set up a time with me. If students are not out by 9.10 pm, they lock the building.”

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“I really believe that for the postgraduate students, there is no-one to assist them emotionally.”

“Mostly email . . . There is a(n) [after hours] venue but a bad booking system, so there’s never one available.”

“The DLL’s ‘Juggling to learn’ booklets are really useful but not everyone knows about them.”

With reference to their conditions and experiences of employment, these respondents predominantly felt included in their respective departments and faculties; for example, departmental and faculty meetings were usually arranged to accommodate their schedules as part-time employed staff, and they were encouraged to be part of departmental and faculty activities.

In terms of the faculty’s quality assurance arrangements as regards teaching and learning, respondents displayed diverse views, in that they felt either completely informed or not at all apprised of departmental of faculty requirements in this area.

The following are noted as recommendations that come from the first phase of data collection which demonstrate certain basic needs of part-time staff including their need for recognition:

“There should be a dedicated space for part-time tutorials. Tutorial rooms should also be better maintained to make it more comfortable and welcoming. At the moment there are chairs and tables all over the place.”

“Prioritise office space for part-time employed academic staff who do not have office space.”

“Part-time employed lecturing staff needs some form of validation for their efforts.”

“Students sometimes feel we don’t respond in time.”

“We need a specific officer in the faculty to look at after-hours issues, and this could be a permanent member of staff to ensure continuity.”

“Part-time employed lecturers should be paid more by the University.”

“There should be a part-time teaching award, and the first and second-years should be asked to give their substantiated views of the best part-time employed lecturer.”

“I want to again recommend that part-time lecturers must attend the University’s orientation, and alert students to the ways in which they want to package their studies – not to take too many courses at the same time. Guidance and counseling is lacking.”

At a consultative workshop organized by DLL on 27 January 2009, participants confirmed that although part-time employed teaching staff is involved in after-hours provision across the University, institutional information appears to be uneven, decentralized and faculty-based in this regard. Both the working experiences, as well as the teaching and learning experiences, of part-time employed faculty are either unknown or, at best, remain at the margins institutionally.

The varied nature of their responses, and even the shock expressed by one participant (as indicated by the second response below), confirms our view of the unevenness of institutional information:
“... Some HoDs don’t even know the names of the lecturers in the part-time programmes.”

“I am shocked to hear this... In the School where I am, this doesn’t happen. There is no difference between full-time and part-time employed staff, and there is full integration of staff who teach on the after-hours programmes.”

“I agree with what [ ... name withheld ... ] is talking about. The lecturers in the part-time programmes are not well-known.”

“I can ‘third’ that... There is no induction, no mentoring, not a great salary. It comes back to the Department to take responsibility.”

“For our next gathering it would be good to gather information about what is the pool of expertise of the part-time lecturers... so that the University can build a profile of expertise of part-time employed faculty.”

In terms of the secondary question of our research, a participant who regarded their School as exemplary as regards part-time provision, the following was stated:

“It has to be driven by the HoD. Our director encourages and contacts everyone to be part of staff development activities. He would direct notices to everyone, with a directive: please be there. Part-time employed lecturers must participate in all formal meetings of the Department, and the Divisions within the Department.”

We have used the findings of Knight et al.’s (2007, 420--438) recent study as a point of reference for our own study, and find that, in terms of their seven points, there is significant resonance. They elaborate the need for recognition and belonging by part-time staff, which includes induction and professional development. They also recommend that there is a much wider appreciation of the difference between part-time teachers on fractional contracts and those employed by the hour, since this has a bearing on the way in which their professional development as teachers can optimally be supported.

Our research data confirms that departments, and most notably heads of department, play a seminal role in ensuring that part-time employed lecturing staff are apprised or not of academic developments, and academic development opportunities, within the department. Our findings suggest that all faculty information pertaining to the varied employment arrangements of part-time employed academic staff should be registered centrally so that the institution is able to effect appropriate staff development opportunities for part-time academic staff, taking into consideration that they are employed by faculties often for different reasons and lengths of time, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they may have different professional development needs.

Our research data confirms a view that there should be one quality standard across the entire University for teaching and learning but that the ways these are thought about and implemented may well vary, given the very different conditions for many of the students and many of the staff.
CONCLUSION

Our research can confirm the following regarding part-time employed academic staff at the University:

They form part of a scattered, and not easily identifiable, landscape at the University; they vary in age from that of senior student assistants to professors-extraordinaire; they are variously motivated for wanting to be employed on a part-time basis by the University; at the two extremes: the majority appear to be seeking permanent, fulltime employment and this is a bridge towards that, while others prefer the part-time arrangement as it affords them flexibility to keep their professional and personal spaces outside the University; most continue to teach on a part-time and after-hours basis for the love of teaching and the interaction with students, and are very concerned with the remuneration, which seems relatively low by comparison to the other regional universities; most have fixed term contracts for the duration of a year, all of those interviewed would include ‘being a committed teacher’ as part of their identities.

We have noted that this picture is still incomplete. However, while the University continues to develop an institution-wide picture of who these lecturers may be, this research has afforded the institution a developed sense of what is needed in order to bring prominence to the multiplicity of identities and responsibilities part-time employed lecturers take on.

In this regard, we would concur with Gappa (1984), who states:

The challenge is not to provide parity with full-time faculty. Instead, it is to establish clearly articulated, well understood, humane and equitable policies and practices that clearly accommodate the variety among part-timers themselves (Head 1979; Smith 1980; Stern and Others 1981; Wallace 1982). . . . Faculty employment policies and practices should constitute a continuum embracing the total group: from fulltime tenured faculty to fully qualified, continuing part-time faculty interested in their teaching careers to contingency faculty hired to meet the demands of enrollment.

Most, if not all, respondents expressed an interest to understand more about the after-hours culture at the University, and their participation within that culture; most welcomed a dedicated place for ‘after-hours practitioners’ to meet one another and to receive after hours students. While there is a range of contract types for after-hours lecturing, it is likely that a significant proportion of part-time employed teaching staff have sessional contracts, which are less than ten months in duration and are even more peripheral to the institution than the respondents in this study. In respect of quality assurance, this research does not present evidence of poor teaching; there is a view from the data that poor teaching could in fact be highlighted faster than exemplary teaching, in terms of current student feedback systems.

A secondary research question, pertaining to quality assurance, – ‘assessing the impact on teaching and learning’ – shed light on an unexpected complexity. Findings have suggested that it is not ‘cut and dried’ as to whether part-time employed lecturers,
and those who teach after hours, are the most significant group for managers to be concerned with regarding poor teaching. From an outwardly conscientious part-time employed lecturer who teaches after hours, we learnt that it may be possible, through faculties’ student feedback and evaluations systems, to uncover ‘bad teaching’ relatively more easily than it is to establish and replicate good teaching in those after-hours situations.

In this regard the notion of ‘one quality standard for all teaching and learning’ is important but consideration should be given to the extent to which there can be creative application of that standard so that all kinds of teaching and learning contexts are monitored optimally by the University. There was general appreciation of the innovative developments at UWC to affirm part-time students as with the dedicated After Hours Study Zone, where services are available; the Senate approved Framework for After Hours Provision; and the Lifelong Learning Awards for students. However more is needed to recognize the contributions and the conditions of part-time lecturers who work in the after-hours programme ensuring their integration into the functioning of the institution. A first important step is to ensure their greater visibility through a centralized database so that the trends and the numbers and distribution of part-time academics are monitored.

Through the research, it was clear that not enough is known about who teaches on the after-hours programme and further research is necessary both at UWC but also more generally. However, the research did reveal that the part-time lecturers are a great asset to the university and need to be treated as such, both to improve the quality of teaching and learning and in the interests of fairness. It is taking a long time to have higher education institutions shift their practices to acknowledge the large number of adult and part-time students in their midst; it is now time that the conditions of the part-time academics are also put under the microscope, as Muzzin (2009) argues, to ensure that they are treated ethically and fairly. Discussion of transformation in higher education in South Africa must include improving the conditions for part-time adult learners and their part-time lecturers.

NOTES

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After-Hours vs Part-Time: ‘After-hours’ refers to the lecture periods 8–11 (17h00-21h00 on Monday to Friday), to dedicated periods in weekends and to block periods during the University holidays. ‘Part-time’ refers to students who are registered as part-time, and also to staff who are not full-time employees.
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