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Abstract

This inquiry is an analysis of the trend toward infusing practitioners into the preparation of school administrators. Motives for increasing the number of part-time employees in higher education are identified and specific problems associated with the deployment of these instructors are discussed. The argument is made that the merits of this trend depend on the extent to which department policy addresses adjunct faculty employment, deployment and development in relation to a reform vision and strategy. Essential policy considerations related to involving practitioners are recommended.

Since the early 1980s, part-time instructors have become much more prevalent in school administration preparation programs (Shakeshaft, 2002). General explanations for this trend have ranged from reducing enrollment instability risks to managing budget reductions to improving program quality (Beem, 2002; Fogg, 2001). In educational administration specifically, the pattern of deploying current or former practitioners as temporary instructors also has been linked to two pressing needs: increasing clinical education (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001; Jackson, 2001) and making instruction more practice-based (Hart, 1999; Kowalski, 2005). Although the potential for adjunct and clinical faculty to produce program improvement in professional schools is axiomatic, information about the actual deployment of these instructors provide ample reasons for deans, department chairs and regular faculty to be cautious. For example, recruiting, hiring, orientation and enculturation practices among and within universities have been found to be inconsistent (Reid, 1996) and a reliance on part-time professors has often resulted in preparation programs being understaffed to the point that non-classroom responsibilities get ignored or are unfairly relegated to the few remaining regular faculty (Shakeshaft, 2002).

Two issues related to deploying part-time faculty in school administration programs are addressed here. One is a summary of potential problems and the other is measures that can eliminate or at least reduce the negative effects of these pitfalls. The purpose is to provide a framework for setting policy regarding employment practices for non-tenure eligible faculty.

Perspectives on Adjunct Faculty

Our understanding of the deployment of part-time school administration instructors is shaped by both general employment trends and demographic clarifications. Between 1993 and 1998, 40 percent of the colleges and universities reported cutting the number of full-time faculty positions, and a good portion of these institutions also reported an increase in the employment of adjunct instructors (Fogg, 2001). During the 1990s, approximately 42 percent of all college faculty were employed part-time or in non-tenure eligible positions (Wilson, 2001); this figure is projected to increase to 55 percent by the year 2010 (Schuster, 1998). One reason is that part-time instructors have been and remain a source of inexpensive labor (Fulton, 2000) both because their salaries are comparatively much lower than full-time faculty and because they usually receive no costly fringe benefits (Cox, 2000).

The trend toward reducing tenured faculty has arguably affected all university instructional units. Focusing directly on colleges of education, Arthur Wise, president of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, asserted that economic efficiency (e.g., lowering faculty costs) and managerial accommodations (e.g., reducing uncertainty about staffing needs) continue to be primary reasons for this staffing pattern (Beem, 2002).

With respect to demographic clarifications, the title of adjunct traditionally has been given to practitioners employed full-time outside the university and teaching in the university on a part-time basis. Today, however, the title has become more generic to include instructors holding temporary full-time or part-time appointments. Some university policy manuals actually treat the terms *adjunct* and *part-time* as synonymous. Therefore, clarifications about

part-time faculty in school administration are warranted. As used here, the title refers only to the traditional definition.

School Administration Adjunct Faculty

Literally hundreds of articles, books and position papers have been written on the topic of adjunct professors, many of them focusing on employer and employee abusive behavior (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). The literature pertaining to full-time adjunct faculty has been especially negative, with terms like *exploitation* (e.g., National Education Association, 1988) and *gross injustice* (e.g., Twigg, 1989) being used copiously. Although these critiques account for a high percentage of articles written about adjunct faculty, they are only partly relevant to school administration. Consider just four conditions that make school administration rather unique.

1. Women constitute a majority of adjunct faculty across all disciplines and types of institutions (Conley & Leslie, 2002) but most part-time instructors in educational administration are males (American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2002).

2. Academic credentials of adjunct faculty across all disciplines and types of institutions vary considerably (Avakian, 1995) but virtually all in school administration have earned doctorates (AASA, 2002).

3. Many adjunct faculty are totally or largely reliant on income derived from teaching (Conley & Leslie, 2002) but most part-time school administration instructors are either full-time practitioners or full-pension retired practitioners (AASA, 2002).

4. The modal age range for all adjunct faculty across all disciplines and types of institutions is 35-44 (Conley & Leslie, 2002) but in school administration, the modal age range is 51-60 (64 percent are in this range) (AASA, 2002).

Data such as these clearly reveal that adjunct faculty in school administration do not fit the generic profile. Largely for this reason, some writers (e.g., Tingley, 2002) have concluded that when compared to other disciplines, part-time instructors in school administration are more likely to be influenced by noble motives such as gaining professional respect, pursuing personal growth and contributing to the profession. Recent findings reported in a national study, however, cast some doubt on this conclusion. In an AASA (2002) study, the three most commonly cited reasons for teaching part-time in school administration were: (1) seeking full-time employment as a professor at some subsequent date, (2) creating opportunities to collaborate with full-time faculty members and (3) enhancing one's credentials to serve as a consultant (AASA, 2002).

Deployment of Part-Time Faculty

Criticisms of school administrator preparation, voiced as part of the broad school reform movement that began nearly 25 years ago, have focused largely on program quality and program relevance. Peterson and Finn (1985) were among the first to observe that too little attention was being given to qualifications and performance of superintendents and principals in relation to school improvement. Alleged shortcomings included abysmal admission, retention and graduation standards (e.g., Clark, 1989) and overly theoretical and insufficiently practical program requirements (e.g., Goldman & Kempner, 1988; Maher, 1988). In the midst of these criticisms, two reform groups, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA) (1987) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) (1989), recommended major revisions to professional preparation to ensure an appropriate nexus between theory and practice.

During the early 1990s, many deans and department chairs skillfully melded pressures for efficiency and personnel management with program reform. They cast the employment of part-time faculty as a win-win decision; it lowered operating costs, reduced risk associated with uncertain enrollments and infused practice-based experiences into the curriculum. In part, their creativity may have reflected political reality that more fundamental changes to curriculum and instructional practices were simply too difficult to achieve. Several studies conducted during the late 1980s and 1990s, for instance, have documented that educational administration faculty have been resistant to reforming their own programs (McCarthy, 1999b).

By diverting attention from needed structural changes, the increased deployment of adjunct faculty may have contributed circuitously to sustaining the profession's most disturbing and negative attributes. As examples, average scores for school administration students on the Graduate Record Examination remain lower than those for students in other disciplines and lower than those for students majoring in other areas of education (Keedy & Grandy, 2001). And poorly-staffed and under-funded preparation programs have not been eliminated; even worse, many of them have actually increased their enrollments (Kowalski & Glass, 2002).

Other limitations of employing part-time faculty have been well documented. As one example, employers often fail to provide job descriptions and specific expectations to part-time personnel (Gappa & Leslie, 1993); yet, role ambiguity is known to reduce job performance, job satisfaction and employee commitment (Monroe & Denman, 1991). Moreover, when part-time instructors are uncertain about their role and responsibilities, students are more likely to perceive them as inept, powerless and vulnerable to manipulation (Cassebaum, 2001).

Many part-time instructors have only a limited perspective of their university responsibilities, often because they have not received orientation (Ilg & Raisch, 2000) nor have they been given guidance by a faculty mentor (Wickun &

Stanley, 2002). Not infrequently, they are assigned to teach in remote classrooms and provided little or no direction about using technology to support their teaching (Watson & McGregor, 2002). Many are disempowered by a lack of respect, both in the university in general and in the employing department specifically (Fulton, 2000) and this disconfirmation ultimately affects their students negatively (Burk, 2000). In professional schools, these instructors often are outside the mainstream of departmental governance and decision making (Popper, 1997) thus diminishing their ability to influence critical instructional decisions.

A national study conducted several years ago found that 40 percent of all graduate programs in school administration employed fewer than five full-time faculty members (McCarthy, 1999a). When all or most courses and clinical experiences are staffed by adjuncts, the potential for a mediocre educational experience increases dramatically regardless of the discipline (Simpson, 1991). Commenting on the developing dependence on adjunct instructors in school administration, Shakeshaft (2002) aptly observed, "No high school principal would try to staff the curriculum with substitute teachers no matter how much the school board might save" (p. 30).

Part-time faculty members also have been the source of problems. Many accepting part-time teaching positions eventually experience conflict between their primary and secondary responsibilities. When they do, classes typically get cancelled as practice-based responsibilities take precedent (Lyons, Kysilka, & Pawlas, 1999). In addition, some have elected not to follow course syllabi, opting instead to spend class time in unstructured discussions of their personal practice (Otto, 2000). Contrary to popular belief, students are not always enamored by instructors who tell "war stories" or engage self-promotion discussions instead of teaching intended course content (Lyons et al., 1999). A recent study found that 48 percent of part-time instructors admitted spending less than five hours per week preparing for class (AASA, 2002).

Developing Policy Statements

Given the potential pitfalls of indiscriminately deploying part-time faculty in a professional school, the need for policy in this area should be self-evident. Although policy statements obviously need to be fashioned separately for each institution, there are benchmarks that can guide the task. For instance, all policy for employing and assigning part-time faculty should be grounded in a program improvement vision and a strategy for achieving it. Both the vision and strategy should be developed collaboratively by the department chair, regular faculty and practitioners likely to serve as part-time instructors. Policymaking per se should address three issues: initial employment, deployment and development.

Initial Employment
Policy should stipulate documents that should be in place prior to recruiting and selecting part-time instructors. The first should encompass *statements of purpose and values*. The former identifies objectives associated with employing practitioners as part-time instructors and links the employment to program quality issues. The latter includes belief statements about professional preparation, differentiated faculty roles, collaboration between regular and adjunct faculty and the intended contributions of adjunct faculty.

Second, decisions pertaining to *rank, length of employment and compensation* should be made before recruitment begins. Giving rank (e.g., adjunct assistant professor) can serve two purposes: providing different levels of compensation based on market, merit and service and making it more likely that these instructors will be viewed as part of the department. Multi-year appointments enhance the probability that part-time instructors will participate in non-teaching departmental activities (e.g., committees).

Third, a *general job description* for part-time instructors should be developed. At a minimum, it should include: (a) required and desired qualifications for each possible rank, (b) position responsibilities, (c) role expectations, (d) compensation parameters and (e) other general conditions of employment. Most notably, it should include expectations regarding service to students outside of class and involvement in departmental activities.

Fourth, *quantitative standards* should be established. More precisely, the department members determine a maximum percentage for the classes that can be taught by part-time faculty and the maximum number of courses that can be taught by a part-time instructor (e.g., in a semester or calendar year). As a general rule, the percentage of instruction delivered by part-time faculty should not exceed 25 percent of the department's course load and full-time practitioners should not teach more than one course per semester or two courses per year.

Deployment
Policy should address the often ignored issues of *orientation and mentoring*. Even part-time faculty should have ample information about institutional policy, procedures and logistics (e.g., campus parking, library use). They should be given a notebook detailing pertinent information provided to regular employees and given opportunities to ask questions and seek clarifications after having had an opportunity to digest the information. Mentors should be experienced regular faculty members who not only provide guidance but also model the department's standards for teaching, scholarship and service.

Second, policy should address the *assignment of courses and clinical experiences*. Part-time instructors should not teach five or six different courses over a period of several years nor should they be assigned to teach courses outside their established areas of expertise and practitioner experience. Doing so defeats the primary purpose of infusing practitioners into professional preparation. This caveat is especially cogent in light of the fact that one-third of the

administrators seeking to teach part-time in a university are willing to be assigned to courses in which they have little knowledge (Beem, 2002).

Development

First and foremost, policy should require both *formative and summative evaluations* for adjunct faculty. Ideally, the formative component should be completed by the mentor and department chair and the summative component should be based on multiple sources of evidence covering two primary responsibilities: teaching and departmental involvement. Data can be obtained from student evaluations (formal and informal), supervisor evaluations, peer evaluations and self-evaluations.

Second, policy should address *staff development activities*. More specifically, three options should be considered: (a) involvement of part-time instructors in staff development for regular faculty, (b) activities designed specifically for adjunct faculty and (c) activities designed specifically for an individual employee. Inclusion in staff development has both direct and symbolic significance for strengthening practitioner-professor collaboration.

Third, policy should consider provisions for recognizing *the contributions of part-time faculty*, individually and collectively. For example, an annual award might be established for outstanding performance and the department hosts an annual dinner to recognize all practitioners who are making contributions to the department's mission.

Final Thoughts

The integration of theory and practice-based knowledge is clearly essential in a professional school. Equally clear, however, is the fact that indiscriminately deploying adjunct faculty does not guarantee that preparation is improved. As an example, some departments are now staffed almost entirely by part-time faculty detached from essential activities such as curriculum development, student advising and admission, retention and graduation standards. In some institutions, the deployment of part-time faculty has been used to erode full-time positions and when this occurs, school administration departments are more likely to become "cash cows" (Kowalski, 2004).

An increased reliance on part-time faculty in school administration departments is indisputable; however, very little is known about the consequences of this staffing pattern. Yet, some deans, department chairs and professors continue to claim that the mere involvement of practitioners in professional preparation is de facto a momentous reform. As discussed here, this personnel practice is both promising and troubling. Consequently, efforts are needed on two fronts. First, departments should adopt policy guiding the employment, deployment and development of part-time faculty in an effort to avert known problems. Second, the efficacy of adjunct faculty needs to be studied in relation to regular faculty and practices in school administra-

tion need to be studied in relation to practices in other types of professional schools.

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