

How Adjunct Professors Get Treated In Educational Institutes

Posted on October 30, 2018

Introduction

Joyce Meyer once said:

“Teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges.”

Teaching is a sacred profession, and teachers are considered to be the builders of the future. Adjunctive teaching is a type of teaching in which professors are hired by university staff for short periods of time rather than to work permanently like most of the main faculty of the university. These teachers are hired to serve as a backup plan for times when main course teachers are not available or the workload is more than the normal days. These teachers deliver lectures to students occasionally when designated teachers of that less are not available. The experience of these teachers is lesser than that of the permanent teachers, and they are normally less qualified than the permanent teachers. Due to this reason, their pay scale is also low, with an average of half to less than half of the pay scale of permanent teachers, and they are paid, on average, \$27,000 per class. They are hired on a part-time contract basis for a short tenure period, and most of the time, their tenure is one year or less. After completion of their tenure, they either are reappointed for another tenure or are just terminated. These teachers teach the courses of their expertise to undergraduate and graduate students, but unlike permanent non-tenure-based teachers, they cannot conduct research and cannot publish their research work. These teachers are mostly graduates of master's degrees with research in their field. For teaching as an adjunct professor, they must have a degree in teaching or education and must have a license to teach provided by the present government. This essay is a research on the issues adjunctive teachers face in their jobs. For this research, we interviewed an adjunct teacher, Professor Opiela, who has more than six years of experience in teaching in universities, four years of experience in adjunctive teaching, and several researchers. We asked Professor Opiela several questions about his experience in this job, and we will present our research based on his answers. Our research will answer the questions of what implications adjunctive teaching has on our education system and what responsibilities it has for us.

Discussion

Professor Opiela served in the field of teaching for six years, and by conducting his interview, we learned how difficult it was for him to survive in these harsh conditions. According to him, there were no facilities provided to the teachers. The adjunct teachers were paid less than half of permanent teachers, where their work was no less than the permanent teachers, and sometimes it was more hectic. In his teaching job, he faced a lot of difficulties, and many points came up in his life when he lost hope and wanted to give up. When asked about his job, he told us that his job was just like any other permanent professor; most of the time, he had to cover for the permanent designated teacher of the class, and when he took an off or was busy with some other important assignments.

Opiela told us that the biggest thing that always haunted him throughout his service was his job stability. The university administration had appointed many adjunct professors in his period of time, and their percentage was a third of the total faculty of the university. The majority of the teachers were appointed to teach less technical courses, and some, like him, were appointed for more technical ones. He told us that no day passed when he didn't have a fear of being fired. The university was firing lots of tenured teachers, and most of the teachers he saw came and went during his period. There were no benefits provided to him, and his pay was too low for him to cover his basic expenses. There was no concept of health benefits or other incentive bonuses for tenured teachers, and discrimination demotivated a lot of young teachers.

Adjunctive teaching is an important part of our education system, but sadly, adjunctive teachers are not appreciated as they should be. They are hired mostly to cover for other permanent staff and teach the students on an urgent basis. These teachers are mostly hired on short tenure periods and are given very little pay. The incentives provided to these teachers are negligible, and there is no concept of health or life insurance. Universities take advantage of adjuncts as they have to pay less to them and have the task done without any promises. As this whole job is temporary, it saves the educational institutes from following the required procedure in the hiring of teachers and following the plan to discuss their pay according to their expertise and health benefits. This type of hiring saves the universities of any commitment, and they have enough eligible teachers who can deliver lectures to students anytime by paying less than what is paid to permanent employees and the incentives in their contracts.

The most important issue tenure teachers face relates to the nature of their job, and that is their job stability. Most universities hire adjunct professors on contracts and offer them very basic pay. These teachers, as they need experience, agree to the offers that do not include any health or life insurance, no monthly or yearly bonuses, and restrictions from further research. University administrations exploit the needs of young people as they know they need experience teaching in institutions to be hired as permanent employees in reputable universities. Having no other options, teachers accept the offers, knowing it will restrict any research opportunities for them during the tenure period. Being under no obligations of law, university staff fire the tenure teachers by giving short notice periods

when they need new permanent staff or just want to reduce the number of staff.

Being an adjunct professor is no easy task. The adjunct teachers face a hectic routine and sometimes have to work more than the permanent teachers to show their loyalty and interest in the job. Being in a tenure period, they can publish any research or publish their research papers publically. Many times, their scheduled classes get canceled due to the immediate appearance of the permanent teacher, and many times, they are reassigned to another class whose teacher is not available. Switching between classes is critical as the teacher has to stay awake and keep a record of the current lectures and chapters being discussed in the class, as well as any assessments that are due. The teachers have to face some critical issues in their experience where they need the supervision of the designated teacher, but due to unavailability, they have to make those critical decisions. Despite all this, they continuously deliver the best education to the students, and their efforts are underappreciated.

Interviewing Professor Opiela, we learned about the behavior of universities that they face on a daily basis. They are not respected by universities and are given a workload equivalent to permanent teachers. They are constantly “on call” and must report to the job if their need arises during any lecture due to the unavailability of the main course teacher. Here, a point that needs attention is that despite their service and hectic routine, the university staff still don’t provide them with any kind of incentives or benefits. After the introduction of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as educational institutions are obliged to provide health benefits and insurance to teachers, there has been a decrease in the employment of permanent teachers and an increase in the number of tenured teachers. (Sommers et al., 2015). The strategy behind this action is to reduce the cost of health benefits that institutes have to provide to permanent employees, which they are not obliged to provide to tenure-based adjunctive employees.

This imbalance between facilities of permanent and adjunct teachers is highly discouraging for new teachers, and their motivation to teach is greatly affected by this discrimination. The sacred field of teaching needs reform in the hiring and pay structure of adjunctive teachers, as they are an important part of our education system. The harsh behavior of educational institutes and their treatment of adjunctive teachers need to be carefully analyzed and reformed by the governments. To appreciate the teachers in further research in their fields and for serving as teachers in this field, there is a need for a good educational structure that takes care of both the financial needs and health benefits of the young teachers starting their career in teaching.

Conclusion

In short, the harsh behavior provided to adjunctive teachers is decreasing their motivation for the best education delivery, and this discouragement can cause a reduction in their loyalty to their profession. The adjunctive teachers need appreciation in terms of both their pay and the incentives that are provided to non-tenured-based teachers. They deserve equal respect and appreciation in

educational institutes and by the students, as they are no less important than the permanent teachers. Our educational institutes need to improve the pay structure and health benefits of adjunctive teachers to ensure the best education delivery and encouragement of teachers in the teaching field.

Works Cited

Sommers, B. D., Gunja, M. Z., Finegold, K., & Musco, T. (2015). Changes in self-reported insurance coverage, access to care, and health under the Affordable Care Act. *Jama*, 314(4), 366-374.

"Blogs." *The Chronicle Of Higher Education*, 2018,
<https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/converstaion/2014/02/24/assignments-research-your-adjunct-teachers/>