

Outside looking in: a study of adjunct faculty experiences at offshore branch campuses in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This study examines the perspectives of adjunct (short-term contract) faculty teaching at offshore branch campuses in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The rise of the global adjunct labor class and the expansion of universities to overseas markets in the form of branch campuses are just two examples of the extension of neoliberal and consumerist ideology to higher education. While the problems of implementing corporate-style practice and policy in higher education is much critiqued in the literature, this research centers on the intersection of the two issues just mentioned. The primary motivations for undertaking this study were to explore a) branch campus adjuncts' perceptions of being connected to their university community, and b) the possible impact of their labor conditions on pedagogical conditions. Five adjuncts from four separate branch campuses were interviewed, and the semi-structured interviews analyzed using a critical discourse analysis approach. The findings revealed that the adjuncts often felt isolated from their branch campus and considered themselves to be carrying out the educational mission of the home campus despite having no contractual relationship with the home campus. I argue that the working conditions of the adjuncts have a negative impact on teaching experience and, to a degree, on pedagogy. A more formalized employment relationship between branch campus adjuncts and the home campus is recommended, as well as the provision of professional development and research engagement opportunities for adjuncts.

تبحث هذه الدراسة في وجهات نظر المدرسين الملحقيين في فروع الجامعات في دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة. إن صعود الطبقة العاملة العالمية الملحقة وتوسع الجامعات إلى الأسواق الخارجية في شكل فروع جامعية ليست سوى مثالين على امتداد الإيديولوجية النيوليبرالية والاستهلاكية إلى التعليم العالي. على الرغم من أن مشكلة تطبيق ممارسات وسياسات النمط التجاري في التعليم العالي قد تعرضت لنقد كبير في الأدبيات، فإن هذا البحث يركز على تقاطع المثالين الموصوفين. كانت الدوافع الرئيسية لإجراء هذه الدراسة هي استكشاف (1) مفاهيم ملحقي فروع الجامعات لكونهم مرتبطين بمجتمع الجامعة؛ (2) ما تأثير ظروف عملهم على الظروف التربوية. لجمع البيانات، أجريت مقابلات مع خمسة مدرسين ملحقيين من أربعة فروع جامعية منفصلة. تم تحليل المقابلات شبه المنظمة باستخدام منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي. وكشفت النتائج أن الملحقيين غالبًا ما شعروا بالعزلة عن حرمهم الجامعي واعتبروا أنفسهم ينفذون المهمة التعليمية للحرم الجامعي المحلي رغم عدم وجود علاقة تعاقدية لهم داخل الحرم الجامعي. أنا أزعج أن ظروف عمل الملحقيين لها تأثير سلبي على ممارسة التدريس. توصي الدراسة بخلق علاقة توظيف أكثر رسمية بين الملحقيين في الحرم الجامعي الفرعي والحرم الجامعي الداخلي، بالإضافة إلى توفير فرص التطوير المهني والبحث للمشاركة للمدرسين الملحقيين.

Introduction

If we presume that the core mission of higher education, no matter the context, is to educate, then we need to consider the experiences of those who are tasked with educating. Education in this study is considered to be the way in which the educational mission of a university is carried out by academics through teaching, research, and service. As is firmly established in the literature, one dominant driving force impacting higher education globally is the corporatization of higher education (Giroux, 2015; Molesworth, Scullion & Nixon, 2011; Diefenbach & Klarner, 2008). *Corporatization* describes the ways in which neoliberal business practices have effectively subsumed traditional models of university governance and practice. The objective of this study is to explore two issues connected with the corporatization and marketization of higher education, and to consider how these issues are intertwined. The first issue under examination is the increased reliance on adjunct (short-term contract) academic staff to conduct the majority of teaching in higher education. The second issue is the exportation of this employment model to offshore

university branch campuses globally, and in the specific instance of this study, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The motivation for investigating the intersection of these subjects is twofold. The primary inquiry centers on the working conditions of adjuncts employed at branch campuses in Dubai, and since this paper takes the position that teachers' employment conditions cannot be separated from pedagogical conditions, the impact of adjuncts' perceptions of their working circumstances on teaching and learning is discussed. For this study, the pedagogical implications constitute the ways in which teaching (and hence learning) is affected by marketization practices.

This study is centered on semi-structured qualitative interviews with five adjunct instructors at branch campuses in Dubai. Dubai, along with the rest of the United Arab Emirates, Gulf countries, Singapore and Malaysia, is a popular destination and lucrative market for branch campuses (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011; Lane, 2011). The emirate of Dubai has two designated economic zones (Academic City and Knowledge Village) dedicated exclusively to training and education. These zones provide the physical infrastructure for branch campuses (Altbach, 2010); that is to say, the home campus licenses its academic curriculum to a local business investor, who then manages the marketing, human resources, and financial strategy. The level of oversight and regulation from the home campus is therefore variable, depending on the contractual agreement with the local investor.

Literature review

In the United States, more than 70% of the teaching faculty at colleges and universities are classified as part-time or adjunct faculty. This percentage has grown steadily since the 1970s. By contrast, in 1969, 80% of faculty members were full-time and tenured (Fredrickson, 2015). Now, even perceived elite institutions with large endowments employ a majority of faculty members on a contingency basis (Eagan, Jaeger & Grantham, 2015; O'Hara, 2015). In the United Kingdom, statistics collected by the University and College Union (2016) show that "46% of universities and 60% of colleges use zero hours contracts to deliver teaching", meaning an employee is not guaranteed a minimum number of working hours. In Australia too, a country historically associated with relatively fair labor practices, more academic staff members are hired on contingency contracts than full-time employment contracts (Bray & Walsh, 1998; Fenwick, 2006; Andrews et al., 2016). No other field, except perhaps journalism, employs contractors to carry out the core mission of their organizations in the way that higher education does (Fredrickson, 2015). Furthermore, teaching adjuncts work directly with students whereas contractors in other industries are "not as engaged with their service recipients" (Cross & Golderberg, cited by Cha & Carrier, 2016). In the overall scheme of the part-time workforce, adjuncts are highly educated outliers who deliver an essential core service.

Although adjuncts are employed at all levels of higher education, evidence demonstrates that their working conditions are often insecure and, sadly, exploitative (McRae, 2012). In this circumstance lies a great irony. Globally, neoliberal governmental policy has overtly (European Commission, 2002) and implicitly promoted life-long learning and credentialing as a strategy to address unemployment, citizenship, and social cohesion (Olssen, 2006). Many individuals have arguably sought higher levels of education because governmental and educational policies have promoted the notion that more education equals greater financial security. However, full-time adjuncts, who often work at more than one university, are highly educated and qualified (Edmunds, 2015). Yet these adjuncts often work without benefits or security and labor for a salary that, when adjusted for time spent working, is below the minimum wage (Saccaro, 2014). Personal essays published by adjuncts have relayed accounts of some needing to rely on food stamps and even succumbing to homelessness (Quick, 2014; Sweeney, 2011). Statistics compiled by the UC Berkley Labor Center (Jacobs et al., 2015) confirm these accounts and reveal that 25% of part-time faculty in the U.S. have relied on public assistance programs. Part-time faculty members were also listed in the top four groups of workers

with poverty-level wages. Only the fast food, child, and home-care industries have higher percentages.

Nevertheless, when examining adjunct labor conditions, it is also necessary to remember that each adjunct has an individual relationship to their contingency status. Not all adjuncts are full-time career adjuncts balancing several part-time contracts, and not all adjuncts consider teaching their primary professional identity. For one, part-time status can be classified as voluntary or involuntary – ‘voluntary’ meaning that the adjunct has elected to work part-time, possibly because they are employed full time in ‘industry’ or are not the primary household earner. Involuntary part-time adjuncts are those who wish to work full-time in academia but are unable to secure a permanent position. In the United States, the majority of adjuncts classify themselves as involuntary. Unsurprisingly, involuntary part-time workers report lower levels of job satisfaction (Eagan, Jaeger & Grantham, 2015).

From a university management perspective, employing adjuncts has clear cost-saving benefits; and in fairness to this viewpoint, the traditional alternative, the tenure system, is not a perfect one. The tenure system was initially designed to provide job security to faculty members, making termination without cause difficult, especially for issues related to academic freedom. For instance, holding tenure protects faculty members from being terminated for expressing viewpoints that may run contrary to their university administration (American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 2017). Additionally, adjuncts from industry can also bring significant expertise to the classroom, providing students with ‘real-life’ experience and examples. However, this view of adjuncts is, of course, from a management perspective rather than a pedagogical one. Untenured faculty members, including adjuncts, have reported self-censorship for fear of being terminated (AAUP, 2017); and faculty from ‘industry’ may have field-specific knowledge but limited or no pedagogical knowledge or experience. It is further worth noting that just as the number of part-time teaching staff has grown, the number of full-time university managers and administrators has also risen (Tahir, 2010; Giroux, 2015). The outsized role that management has to come to play in universities is questionable, and the impact this might have on pedagogy is an area that could be researched more.

Though the evidence summarized above stems mainly from Anglo-Western contexts, there is reason to believe it evinces both a greater global trend in casual employment practices (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2007) and the continuing impact of neoliberal economic policies on higher education (Giroux, 2011). Adjuncts are part and parcel to the contemporary university hierarchy; they teach in a competitive global era of higher education and credentialing (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2010) and, whether explicitly stated or not, higher education is a valuable export commodity for primarily English-speaking nations. The recruitment and enrollment of international students are both a priority and a necessity for many colleges and universities to ensure financial viability (Lewin, 2012; Stephens, 2013). In the more literal sense of exporting, many universities and colleges now physically deliver their services and degrees in the form of offshore branch campuses (Verbik, 2015), and the academic staffing of branch campuses is little explored in the research.

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) reported that since 2006, the number of branch campuses has increased by 43% (cited by Altbach, 2010). Branch campuses, sometimes referred to as ‘transnational higher education institutions’, can be defined as outlets of colleges and universities that “award their degrees to students located in a different country” (Shams & Huisman, 2012, p. 107). Host country motivations for recruiting branch campuses include economic development (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006), provision of local higher education opportunities to reduce travel expenses, and the “desire to [become] regional education hubs” (Lane, 2011, p. 367). For a home campus, branch campuses are a marketing strategy employed to expand their brand and elevate their reputation in foreign markets (Edwards & Edwards, 2001). Though an institute of higher education may, understandably, take issue with the word ‘franchise’ being applied to branch

campuses, it is not a wholly inaccurate descriptor. Furthermore, a university with a branch campus seeks to offer the same quality of service, curriculum, and credentials in the host country as in the home country. It should further be noted that, although marketing and advertising campaigns often emphasize the equal quality and accreditation of the branch campus and home campus, parties at the home campus sometimes contest the level of equivalency. Altbach (2010) summarizes this attitude in the *Journal of International Higher Education*:

Let us be honest about branch campuses. With a few notable exceptions, they are not really campuses. They are, rather, small, specialized, and limited academic programs offered offshore to take advantage of a perceived market. (p. 2)

Furthermore, the academic “staffing at the peripheries”, as Coleman (2003) describes, can be complicated and variable. For one, students in the host country sometimes enroll with the expectation that the faculty from the home country will deliver the course content (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Yet the practicalities and expenses involved in relocating faculty, short-term or permanently, from the home country can be prohibitive (Gill, 2009; Shams & Husiman, 2012). The host country faculty may not wish to relocate their family abroad for a long-term posting, or they may not desire to teach material in an environment where the cultural and religious values of the host country may present conflicts vis-à-vis their subject area (Smith, 2009). As a result, branch campuses often recruit academic staff from the host country, though this strategy is not immune to criticism. Those who are critical argue that employing local staff may be detrimental to teaching and students' learning because highly qualified lecturers are often in short supply in the developing world where most branch campuses are set up. Even though this point is often presented as a pragmatic concern, it is deserving of some scrutiny. This type of criticism relies on perhaps unconscious biases and assumptions about the developing world (Ziguras, 2008). A lecturer, with insider cultural knowledge, might be well equipped to deliver certain content to local students. From these issues, we can perceive that the academic staffing of branch campuses is still under debate.

It is reasonable to conclude that the two issues under discussion in this paper, the reliance on adjunct faculty and the increase in overseas branch campuses, cannot be viewed in isolation. Further, we can infer that there is potential cross-over of the two issues and that these are both involved in the “top-down imposition of market models” and the “marketization” of universities, which have affected higher education practices since the Reagan and Thatcher administrations (Fairclough, 2015, p. 3). Cost-saving practices (such as employing adjuncts) and exporting strategies (such as branch campuses) are simply two of many examples of applying privatization strategies towards education. The reliance on adjuncts to carry out the majority of university teaching and the staffing issues related to the expansion of Western universities to foreign markets are two trends that are likely to converge. The pedagogical implications of this convergence are what inspired the central focus of this research. Pedagogical implications denote the level to which the adjuncts felt secure within their university communities and empowered in their teaching practice. This point is also considered within the larger scheme of neoliberal influence on higher education.

Adjunct labor on branch campuses, and in the UAE in particular, is an under-researched area. While each branch campus has its own organizational structure and mode of operation, this study takes the position that branch campus adjuncts are an identifiable category of individuals with some shared experiences; and their perceptions provide valuable insight into how market-driven practices impact educational experience in an era of global expansion of higher education, particularly in the Gulf region. To examine this subject, I will analyze the narratives of several adjuncts working on the ‘outer edges’ of universities (offshore branch campuses). I will address the following questions:

Research Question 1: What level of connection do the adjuncts have to both their branch campus and their home campus?

Research Question 2: What impact might the labor conditions of the adjuncts interviewed have on pedagogical conditions?

Methods

Data collection

The present study is centered on semi-structured qualitative interviews with five adjunct instructors at branch campuses in Dubai. Participants were recruited through an e-mail solicitation sent to several branch campuses in Dubai. Five participants from four different offshore branch campuses volunteered to participate in interviews about their adjunct teaching experiences. A sixth participant from a local government university also volunteered to be interviewed; however, when the focus on the branch campus environment began to emerge from the data, a decision was made to exclude her interview from the analysis. This decision was made to keep the focus on branch campuses, though in a future study, it could make a useful point of comparison. All of the interviews were conducted privately and face-to-face, except for one interview where, due to scheduling difficulties, two participants were interviewed together. The interview data was collected between October and December 2016, and several follow-up questions were sent via e-mail in January 2017. All participants have been given pseudonyms, and the names of their institutions have been concealed and referred to only by their country of origin, for example, "UK University".

Participants and researcher

Participants were recruited through a convenience and snowball strategy. Though participants came from different countries (Croatia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Pakistan), the similarities among them were striking. All the participants were women. All had relocated because their partners had been given a job transfer to Dubai. Though unprompted, each participant mentioned the challenge the relocation posed to her sense of autonomy and confidence. Each woman discussed the difficulties of establishing a meaningful and productive professional identity in a new country. Though some had prior experience working in education, they all began teaching at the tertiary level when they found adjunct work at branch campuses in Dubai. The participants were teaching academic writing and research, English as a second language, education, research methods, marketing, and business.

The representativeness of these participants on the adjunct population in the UAE is inconclusive as data on the number of adjuncts working at branch campuses in the UAE is not routinely collected. Often, statistics which are publicly available for the home campus are kept confidential on branch campuses (Healey, 2015; Lane, 2011). However, there is an established history in higher education of women filling adjunct and non-tenure track roles especially in the teaching of composition and rhetoric subjects (Schell & Patricia, 1998).

Perhaps significantly, though not by design, I shared all the above characteristics with the interview subjects. My early curiosity about the conditions of adjuncts at overseas branches arose several years ago when I was going through the staff directory at a branch campus in Dubai. Of the 40-plus academic staff, only five were listed as full-time faculty; the remaining teachers were adjuncts. After informally discussing this point with several adjuncts, many of whom were employed at several branch campuses, I came to the understanding that this was a common organizational structure in their experiences. At the time, I too was employed as an adjunct, so this research is personally meaningful to me. Furthermore, it gave me an insider's perspective. According to Brannick and Coghlan (2007), insider researchers can build on their lived experiences and

use their experiential and theoretical knowledge to reframe their understanding of the situations to which they are close (p. 72)

precisely because of their proximity to the situation. In this case, I believe sharing a similar background to the participants helped me to develop a better sense of camaraderie during interviews. It also helped me grasp the adjuncts' perspectives as well as the practices of their institutions. Despite these benefits, there are limitations to insider research, and while personal experience does provide a reference point to begin research, there are questions of confirmation bias, which will be addressed below in the reflective critique section.

Data gathering

The research approach I applied to collect data was in the form of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research method which can maximize our access to an interviewee's point of view. Conversely, a structured interview, or survey, is more likely to lead to labeling and classification (Bryman, 2012). I wanted to focus on the individual narratives of the participants, especially since there is very little qualitative data in the literature about the adjunct experience of working at offshore branch campuses. This also allowed for flexibility: the semi-structured design leaves opportunities to ask follow-up questions about issues raised by the interviewee, which can take the research in unexpected directions. Furthermore, the findings of this study are context restricted to provide a deep qualitative perspective and do not need to represent a generalizable measurement.

Method of analysis

The method used to analyze the interviews is discourse analysis. Though there are a variety of approaches to discourse analysis, the specific tradition, which has influenced this analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA) first proposed by Fairclough (1992). Fairclough's framework is designed to be cross-disciplinary and can be applied concurrently with other forms of analysis, including critical theory. Additionally, the method is not restricted to a specific political viewpoint (Poole, 2010), though Fairclough (p. 3) does state that CDA has "consciousness" raising intentions. This means that CDA can be employed to demonstrate how language both produces and reinforces oppressive social structures.

Consequently, the ontological perspective of CDA requires an acknowledgment of the reality of social structures and the ability of these structures to reproduce, and that language plays a role in the reproduction of power structures. The approach further accepts that ideologies can be made evident and reinforced by language (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). The epistemological philosophy of CDA, therefore, angles toward constructivism. As Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer (2004) explain, discourse includes an examination of meaning, making, semiotics, and context. Critical discourse analysis further encompasses an evaluation of how social power is validated, reproduced, and challenged (van Dijk, 2008). A CDA analyst will scrutinize the linguistic patterns of a text; however, since a text cannot be separated from the social context from which it emerged, the analyst must evaluate the text with social context at the forefront (Paltridge, 2011).

In application, CDA has three phases, which include description, interpretation, and explanation. These phases do not have a compulsory order, nor do they all need to be included in an analysis (Fairclough, 2015). The approach taken in this analysis is a movement from the micro-interpretation of the text to the macro explanation of the text's significance. Therefore, only the descriptive and explanatory stages have been engaged. In the micro descriptive portion, the linguistic details of the interviews are explored. Features such as metaphor and vocabulary are described and evaluated. In a CDA analysis, these discursive characteristics are analyzed to reveal how they signal power struggles; hence, they are examined against a larger socio-economic context. The larger socio-economic context in this analysis is marketization of higher education and neoliberalism, generally. Since this study takes a critical perspective on marketization, and its potential negative impacts on

teaching and learning, in the macro-analysis or explanatory phase I draw upon the social theory of critical pedagogy, in particular the work of Giroux (2015) and his critique of neoliberal practices in higher education.

Results

Findings 1

To address the first research question, participants were asked about their relationships with the community at their local branch campus and their connections to the home campus. The rationale for discussing this point was to gain insight into where in the overall university structure the adjuncts found themselves. For clarity in my analysis, I define 'community' as the quantity and quality of interaction the adjuncts had with their university. This includes adjuncts' relationships with their colleagues and students and their overall sense of belonging to the organization. I argue here that the development of a sense of community and inclusion within a university is important for pedagogy and as a counteraction to neoliberal ideology. If the relationship between a teacher and student or colleagues is merely transactional, the credibility of academic practice and teaching quality can potentially be compromised. Therefore, I dedicated a significant portion of the interviews to discussing the level of social bonding, other than an employer-employee relationship, that the adjuncts had with their universities. In keeping with the CDA analysis (Fairclough, 2015), I was particularly focused on the language used by adjuncts to describe their relationships.

The first interview extract is from Katherine, an adjunct at 'Australian University'. Katherine narrated her experience of joining the branch campus as an adjunct and discussed the limited orientation she received. She described feeling unwelcomed:

They used to have faculty meetings with a lunch and things on a regular basis. At that stage, I wasn't introduced to anybody. I sort of stood around looking like a spare part and sort of spoke to a few people to avoid total embarrassment. Most people ignored me. Um, I discovered later that I went to another one I didn't know so I didn't know if someone was new. That was kind of how it was. There wasn't a lot of social oiling or direction when you started.

In describing her early interactions at the branch campus events, Katherine employed the metaphor "looking like a spare part". As a linguistic symbol, metaphors are popular mechanisms by which individuals can understand their own experiences (Punch, 1998). The metaphorical representation of her presence in faculty meetings as a piece of machinery conveys a demoralizing and isolating experience. A spare part is not only an inanimate object without agency; it is also only called upon in situations to replace a broken piece just to keep the machine running. It will serve its purpose until a new piece is ordered. Katherine may have been employing this metaphor simply to convey the social awkwardness of not knowing anyone at the faculty meeting. Yet, it is also very indicative of the lack of integration of adjunct lecturers into the branch campus community. Several of the interview subjects said that they had received a very limited orientation to their university or universities. One participant, Karolina, had taken it upon herself to help new adjunct members because she had experienced considerable indifference when she started: "I thought I['d] help someone have a better start."

A lack of effort to welcome an individual into a workplace has the potential to alienate and marginalize the employee. More practically, the literature on faculty orientation programs reveals that such programs can help new academic staff better integrate into their institution (Miller & Nadler, 1994; Morin & Ashton, 2004). A formalized onboarding program could, arguably, reduce the wider opinion of adjuncts. Adjuncts are often perceived as non-essential members of the academic community (McRae, 2012) although they are in fact essential if they constitute more than 70% of the

academic faculty in American Higher Education and up to 50% in the U.K. (O'Hara, 2015; AAUP, 2017; UCU, 2018). Katherine also states in her narrative that the others "ignored" her. One could, of course, interpret this as the behavior of unfriendly individuals, but another feasible interpretation is that full-time faculty and staff were inured to having new individuals coming and going. Several interview participants discussed their campuses as having high faculty turnover. High turnover is positively associated with low levels of organizational commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), and I would hypothesize that a sense of exclusion has a connection to turnover. On the other hand, organizations that have provided social support and expressed emotional concern are more likely to have committed and engaged part-time faculty (Neumann & Finlay-Neumann, 1990; Liden et al., 2003; Murphy, 2009. Bland et al. (2006) found that supportive policies, including mentoring and orientation, help faculty develop. Katherine's orientation experience had been so haphazard that she said:

I survived but yeah it wasn't very user-friendly; I didn't feel particularly welcome or anything, I almost left actually.

Beyond orientation, the adjuncts explained their relationship to their branch campus community through their exclusion and inclusion in social events. Fatima, who had earlier revealed that her orientation program, while not substantial, was sufficient, emphasized the significance of being invited to gatherings. Fatima explained,

you know there's always this thing the annual gala dinner is happening and we're not invited kind of thing, so there's that aspect as well where you are- you know, you do feel a little- I wouldn't say part of the family but still, you're on the outskirts looking in so that I think that kind of thing that's a bonding thing as well I suppose. I mean, nobody was ever mean, nobody was ever nasty; it's just a bit of 'us and them' that's there.

This matter seemed to have affected her deeply, as she raised the subject several times unprompted during the interview.

In another interview, Karolina and Emma discussed the level of connection they felt with their branch campus communities. Karolina had experience teaching at three branch campuses; in two of her universities, her experience was one on the border of the community. At the 'Australian University', she had a more substantial connection to the other faculty, through her efforts of making friends and decision to do her work on the campus. In her more recent experience at the 'UK University', Karolina explained that she did not have time to integrate into the community, using the metaphorical description of being "a teaching machine." Karolina and Katherine's accounts paint similar portraits of adjunct experience at two different branch campuses. Emma further confirmed Karolina's narrative, though she utilized humor rather than metaphor to describe her intense workload. There is a long lineage of research examining the ways humor and laughter in discourse are employed to demonstrate agreement with others (Jefferson, 1988; Schenkein, 2009). Additionally, laughter and irony are often non-threatening ways to introduce a grievance (Edwards, 2005).

Karolina: [North American University] I didn't feel part of the team at all because I'd just come in teach do my hours and leave. Um, ah, at [Australian University] I was more part of a team because I made friends with a few people; I wouldn't go home, I would do my- um, whatever I had to do on site. And [U.K. University], I just didn't- when I was there part time I just didn't have time for [anything else but] teaching and grading so I didn't feel part of anything but the classroom; I was just a teaching machine.

Emma: Yeah, I think the same; basically, I remember our boss at [U.K. University] would encourage us to go to some of the student-led campus events; like, they do a big games day, and we were always encouraged to show our faces, but we just didn't have time, so we'd turn up, do 20 minutes, pose for a photo, and go back to grading {laughs}, like, while eating a sandwich.

From the narratives above, we can understand that several adjuncts had an ‘outsiders looking in’ experience when it came to their relationship with the branch campus community. As seen in the literature, these adjuncts’ experience of limited support and feeling ignored are not unique (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). Then, the question of their relationship with the home campus naturally follows. If the home campus supplies the academic direction, one might imagine that adjuncts would have a more formalized relationship with their academic subject counterparts in the home campus. What the participants described, however, was a connection that was both complicated and, at times, confusing. The participants very much identified with the home campus in the sense that they felt their primary job was as a lecturer for the home campus; but they had, in reality, no formal employment contract with the home campus.

Additionally, several adjuncts described having a consistent relationship with their counterparts on the home campus even though it was one limited by distance. In Katherine’s case, her relationship with the home campus was stronger than her relationship with the local branch campus:

The only people I work with are on the offshore campus in Australia, and that's only by e-mail. Um, so those are my colleagues, and it's weird. I mean they're only on the other side of a computer. I mean I have been fortunate to meet some of them along the way and do occasionally have to discuss things on Skype. But that's normally coordination stuff. But I sometimes have to remind myself that I don't work for the university in Australia. I work for a company here; but there's no sense of belonging to that company.

In Marie’s case, the home campus provided the only non-student form of feedback:

I’d like to feel that I’m part of [Australian University], but everything else reminds me that I’m just a contractor for a [Dubai Licensee]. There’s very little contact with [Dubai licensee] other than they issue my paycheck. And yet, I guess everything that I do is centered about my relationship with the [Dubai Licensee]... I haven’t really received any feedback other than from students, um, other than from one unit coordinator [in Australia].

On paper, the adjuncts are not employees of the home campus, although they professionally identify more with the home campus than with the local licensee or branch campus. Despite their physical presence on their local branch campus, adjuncts generally described feeling detached from colleagues and the campus culture. However, there is a sense of legitimate connection to the home campus, though that relationship is not formalized. They are not necessarily outsiders by nature of organizational culture but of policy. Their outsider status to the home campus is defined by their employment terms. They have no contractual relationship to the home campus, only to the local business outfit.

For other participants, interactions with representatives from the home campus were negative. When asked how often they were invited to university social events, Karolina and Emma discussed a disturbing incident of sexual harassment involving a representative from the home campus. This point is mentioned here to raise the question of legal recourse available to part-time contractors of branch campuses. Karolina and Emma are, by legal definition, not employees of ‘UK University’; they are employees of the licensee in Dubai. This affords them limited protection. We can assume that “UK University” has a policy of non-harassment and non-discrimination in practice at their home campus, and that there are available options for civil litigation in the United Kingdom; but these policies and options do not necessarily extend to either the branch campus (local business operator) or the UAE. Issues such as harassment or academic freedom, which we presume to be governed by policy in home country campuses, can place contractors in faraway branch campuses in vulnerable positions and without recourse. If the relationship to the home campus is simply one of licensing academic materials, the home campus, technically, has no obligation towards those delivering those materials. This raises several questions about the implications for adjuncts teaching in a non-university regulated environment.

Furthermore, how do these narratives further our understanding of the power structures within higher education on branch campuses? The sense of isolation expressed by the adjuncts can be explained not just by the organizational cultures of their individual universities but also by how the market forces in higher education can lead to a decay of social bonds (Giroux, 2015). If adjuncts are employed primarily as a cost-saving device, their powerlessness and disposability are rendered apparent in their social remoteness from university management and fellow faculty. In his critique of capitalism, Marx, a founding influence on critical pedagogy, discussed how the worker through commodification and competition practices became alienated from both her labor and her social relations. According to Marx, this created a fragmented society whose members were estranged from one another (Tucker, 1989). Yet, with our present-day neoliberal or late capitalist economy, this fragmentation is not just the result of the system, it is within the design of the system.

Moreover, the branch campus is perhaps the ultimate application of marketization in higher education. In the case of branch campuses, there is not just the influence of private, corporate practices on university governance, but corporate practice is the policy. While the academic materials and content may be licensed from the home campus, faculty employment and student recruitment policies are under the domain of the local business operator. Adjuncts may feel isolated from the home campus and branch campus communities, as indicated in the previous interviews and in the research (Eagan, Jaeger & Grantham, 2015), and there are unexamined implications for the academic community and pedagogy when home campus does even not directly employ the adjuncts.

The narratives indicate an adjunct academic faculty accustomed to having little to no interaction with their workplace outside of the service they were contracted to deliver. They are at once alienated from two university communities, the branch campus and the home campus. This alienation results in adjuncts being isolated from university governance and estranged from educational policy formation. According to Giroux (2011) such isolation of academic labor is transforming higher education:

Unless the attack on academic labor is understood within the larger disciplinary measures at work in university – measures that aim to eliminate any social formation that can potentially engage in critical pedagogy, challenge authority, and collectively assume power – the issue of contract labor will appear incidental to the larger transformations and politics now plaguing higher education (parag. 9).

In other words, by reducing the number of permanent academic faculty, a type of managerial authoritarianism can go unregulated and unchallenged. All faculty, and particularly part-time faculty, are sequestered from decision-making because they have been reduced to hired hands whose power and involvement have been restricted through contingency contracts. The power and agency of adjuncts at branch campuses are further compromised since they often do not have a formalized contract with the home campus. The ways in which this may impact pedagogy and teaching practice are addressed in the following section as the focus turns to the second research question under investigation: what impact might the labor conditions of the adjuncts interviewed have on pedagogical conditions?

Findings 2

The marketization of higher education was something the participants in this study were keenly aware of. However, their perspectives on this model's relationship to pedagogy raised some interesting paradoxes about teaching and learning. When asked whether her personal and professional values aligned with the dominant values espoused by her university, Katherine responded:

Some of them are aligned but not all of them... Which ones are aligned, well, you know, things like doing the best for the students, um, academic excellence; you know, those things are espoused and I think they are worked towards up to a point, certainly. Along with that, um what else {pause} Yeah, sort of, 'there to serve', to do your best for the students; 'the students are your customer' kind of idea.

When we consider the arguments of those opposed to the application of neoliberal policy in higher education, opposition to the idea of the 'student as client' is a primary point of contention. Giroux (2015), from a critical perspective, maintains that reducing students to consumers is both disempowering and dangerous. First, a system where the student is merely a consumer is one in which access to education is determined primarily by monetary power. Second, when students with purchasing power attend university solely for job training purposes, then there is no place for subjects which do not have a "marketable value." This, Giroux argues, is a danger to democracy and critical education. What is noteworthy about Katherine's comment is how the neoliberalism ideology is normalized to the degree that even though her power within her university is subjugated by the application of neoliberal practices (including student as client), she accepts these practices as 'common sense.' When something becomes 'common sense' or normalized in discourse, it signals that ideology has subsumed other competing ideologies (Fairclough, 2015). Though we cannot take Katherine's viewpoint as all-encompassing evidence, it does very much express how individuals unquestioningly assimilate into capitalist power structures because they are fatalistically accepted as the norm or just the ways things are, with the assumption that "the world cannot be any different from the way it is" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 125). They do this even when they know they are benefitting the system rather than having the system benefit them,

Interviewer: Do you think your institution is aware of that that you're not the breadwinner?

Katherine: (laughing) Yes; I mean, that's the other thing as an adjunct there's no benefits of any kind.

Interviewer: Do you think you should be entitled to some benefits? And if so, which ones do you think would be appropriate?

Katherine: Umm, again; because I don't really need them cause I get them through my spouse um, but I do think the principal adjunct staff should have some benefits especially such things as medical aid, but I also know from a business point of view when you've got lots of part time people it doesn't always make sense ah so you trade off the flexibility with not having those more kind of um substantial ah perks, so yeah, I think from looking at it from a business framework to me, that's fair.

Above, the application of corporate practice in higher education is conceptualized as a matter of fact. My point here is not to criticize Katherine's perspective, only to demonstrate how the discourse of neoliberalism is so internalized that even those who might be seen as being treated unfairly use it as a justification for the established labor practices. On this point, we can draw a connection with Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, which posits that a population can come to accept the embedded values of an ideology as 'common sense' despite the fact that those values or practices may be unjust (Ayers, 2005) or even harmful to them. Gramsci utilizes the analogy of workers 'settling for the crumbs' to explain why universities, along with other societal and cultural institutions, are able to produce consent and serve as gatekeepers of knowledge.

On the other hand, other study participants were open to criticizing the impact of corporate practice on pedagogy and teaching experience. Fatima, for example, indicated that the branch campus's aggressive recruitment policies often compromised the quality of education:

I would say here mostly the only difference that I feel is the business aspect that's not something that I completely agree with, because I see a lot of {pause} what should I say the focus is to get in more students and I do feel that it affects the quality the overall quality of teaching and learning in the university.

In the sequence below, Emma and Karolina described the changes that 'low enrollment' numbers prompted in the business strategy.

Interviewer: So, [what is your opinion regarding] *My personal professional values are aligned with the dominant values of my institution or institutions.*

Karolina: For me, that was the case at [UK University] for about two years, but then, it just started crumbling at that point because the management took it too far.

Interviewer: What do you mean by, "They took it too far"?

Karolina: Well, they became very business-oriented instead of, um, academically oriented.

Interviewer: Was there some kind of change in licensing or ownership at this point?

Karolina: Not really, just sort of a change in the general, um, business plan for the university, the future.

Emma: I guess the difference that I noticed was that as soon as enrollment started to go down, they really started panicking about, "You can't fail people; we don't want to lose the revenue. They all need to get through." It wasn't explicitly said, but that was just the undertone.

Karolina: But also, increasing the, um, the education fees; that was another thing. As the students started going down, they started increasing the tuition fees, which I found unfair because we were still doing the same job; we were offering the same course, and I didn't think it was fair.

Interviewer: you didn't think it was fair for the students, or you didn't think it was fair for the faculty?

Karolina: It wasn't fair to the students, but also the faculty because, at the same time, our positions were- our titles- job titles were changed, degraded basically; and the jobs were capped at-, um, positions were capped at grade 6, meaning that we couldn't apply for a promotion, that we were just stuck in that position forever.

This is a transparent instance of a managerial class engineering education rather than educators. In the situation above, adjunct faculty and, presumably, full-time faculty as well are removed from positions of power and decision-making in academic practice, in this case, assessment. The narrative from Karolina and Emma and the pressure they experienced to pass students may be a micro example, but it is a symptom of a macro issue, the loss of critical education and the redefining of knowledge as a commercial and highly audited commodity. It is the manifestation of higher education as "a credentializing factory for students and a petri dish for downsizing academic labor" (Giroux, 2011, p. 4). Marie highlighted this issue further when discussing student expectations about learning:

they all come into one group with widely different standards of what academic learning is. Um, I think they all come with the expectation that they are to be fed the information and that magically it get absorbs without them exerting much effort; so that it's a one [way] street and that they're paying for a degree or a qualification, um, instead of taking it as an opportunity to learn to gather data and information as a use for knowledge; this concept is not there.

If academics are removed from the process of defining pedagogy, including assessment, and students equate learning with a purchasable commodity, we are left in a circumstance where knowledge development is compromised on several fronts. In a university structure built upon neoliberal practice, managerial university governance will be motivated by both growth and profit (Ginsberg, 2011; Scott, 2012). What counts as knowledge is only that which can be measured accordingly to market standards, in this case, exit credentials; and what counts as a quality teaching practice is audited performance (Eagan, Jaeger & Grantham, 2015). The adjuncts interviewed for this study were deeply devoted to their students and providing them with a quality education. Yet, as

contractors of for-profits business, they are teaching in contexts with reduced job security and with limited support to develop their teaching practice to address students' needs:

Marie: I always ask my students and I always make it very clear to them that if you feel there's a different way we could get to the end goal then let's talk about it, because everyone learns differently; I don't want to be someone who just sticks to my one method. Each trimester I change, depending on the dynamics of the class. I can pick out people that need a different approach; and it's not that I'm trying to be everything to everyone and it's just that I don't think you can just go through motions repeatedly doing the same things over and over again nor is it interesting to do it that way um yeah I actually think that we need more learning and development as teachers as lecturer

Katherine: ...but I still emphasize that even though people are adjunct or part time they should be available they should be able to avail themselves of development and development opportunities to contribute and belong to the organization... Because you know if you look at turn over it's really high. Um, now that I know in many cases has to do with dissatisfaction; people don't like working here so they leave; um, and that obviously impacts the students: if you've got somebody new teaching a course every trimester for the first time you're not- the quality of teaching has to be compromised. It makes much more sense to have a more steady base of people, you know, kind of being consistent. I know the high turnover, the transient thing, is also a product of the wider social context of course; um, but I have witness[ed] not even adjunct, even full time people, reaching fed up point and, you know, moving on through things that could have been avoided.

Furthermore, having contractor or insecure status also limits opportunities for knowledge development. As contractors, the adjuncts are employed only as teaching technicians on an as-needed basis. Though they described being overworked and constrained for time, many expressed an interest in being able to do research or the aforementioned professional development opportunities to improve teaching practice and student experience. Yet, there was little to no support for adjuncts to engage in either. The ideal of a university has traditionally been the pursuit of new knowledge, and a branch campus should, in theory, provide an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural scholarships for both faculty and students. However, if the majority of academics are adjuncts without any support to participate in a research community, opportunities for intellectual growth, classroom-based research, and participatory research with students are lost.

Reflective critique

All considered, the participants' experiences were not solely negative. In a critical analysis, I believe there is a natural inclination to focus on the data which reveals problems; but the participants had more rounded experiences than just negative ones. Participants also discussed how joining branch campuses as adjuncts gave them an opportunity to teach in higher education. Since none of the participants had previous experience in a tertiary environment, several considered it an opportunity to develop both personally and professionally. Many participants had decided to pursue a second masters or a doctorate as a result of their adjunct teaching experience. Moreover, they were enthusiastic about teaching and developing their classrooms to make them more engaging for students. Some writers raise the issue that adjuncts are often expected to be grateful for their insecure position and see the opportunity as a "gift" or a "favour" (Baraney, 2006 cited by McRae, 2012, p. 3); but most of the adjuncts interviewed did see acquiring an adjunct position as a gift. They were eager to gain experience and felt that this was one way of 'getting their foot through the door'.

This study has acknowledged limitations, the most obvious of which is its small scale. This is a qualitative study based on narrative accounts, meaning that the abstraction of theory relies on the

analyst's perspective. However, I do not claim that my interpretation of the narratives makes for a definitive reading. The richness of qualitative data can lead to a multitude of theoretical lenses and methods of analysis. Though critical perspective of neoliberalism in education (Giroux, 2015) has been heavily influential in my analysis, I do not doubt that I could have arrived at further conclusions had another theoretical framework been used for data appraisal.

Moreover, the participants in this study were also unique in comparison to much of the research on the exploitation of adjunct labor. None of the participants in this study were financially dependent on their adjunct position(s). The financial exploitation of the adjunct labor class is often explored in contemporary research and popular media on labor in higher education. Yet even if the participants in this study were not reliant on their adjunct salaries for pecuniary survival, it does not mean that what they were paid was commensurate with their experience, level of education, or the number of hours worked. Moreover, though a speculative argument (but relevant to the context) one could deduce that they were hired precisely because they would not create the burden of full-time employees, who would require additional spending on the part of branch campus operator on items such as a residency and employment visas in the country.

It is also necessary to reflect on these limitations as well as other weaknesses in greater detail from my perspective as the researcher. My primary point of reflection is the potential influence of confirmation bias in this study. Confirmation bias is a psychological term which describes an individual (or groups) tendency to seek out information which confirms their own experience and disregard evidence that may run counter to their deeply held beliefs (Nickerson, 1998). As mentioned earlier, I shared many of the same experiences as the participants. I had also worked as an adjunct at several branch campuses, and my experiences were sometimes extremely negative. I knew that both the local licensee and home campus were benefiting from my work, but I was, in essence, invisible to both of those organizations. It cannot be denied that this experience both colored my data collection process and interpretation of the interviews. I often wondered if I were just searching for evidence to prove that I was not alone in my experience. The personal nature of the research does then lead me to question my own biases. However, since the experiences expressed by the adjuncts, and my own experience, can be corroborated by both academic literature and first-hand accounts published in news media, there is a wider context that confirms these experiences, and indicates that they may be transferable to other contexts.

My second point of reflection as researcher is the method of analysis I applied. Arguably, critical discourse analysis does lead to a more subjective analysis (Fairclough, 2015). The results are ultimately the interpretation of a single person. Though these results can be placed in the context of academic literature, there are alternative methods that could have been applied to reduce the amount of subjectivity. Several other methods could have been used to analyze the data and were I to do the analysis again I would likely attempt them. One other method, for example, would be a more traditional coding of qualitative data. This method, perhaps in conjunction with software such as NVivo, might have provided the opportunity to paint a more inclusive picture of the interview data. A future study could interview a larger number of adjuncts located in several different countries and interview managers as well to gain further insight. I also believe that within my analysis I could have established a stronger link between pedagogical practice and adjunct labor conditions, but I believe this would require collecting further data on student experience and performance.

Conclusions

Overall, several conclusions can be drawn from the discursive analysis of adjunct interviews, and while they are not generalizable, they are perhaps, transferable to other similar contexts. The first evaluation is that the adjuncts' connection to their branch community is limited at best, and a large

part of their experience included being ignored. The second is that the adjuncts linked their professional identity with the home campus, though this relationship had obstacles and challenges as well. A major complication was a lack of a formalized or contractual relationship with the home campus. The working conditions of the adjuncts are symptomatic of the continued influence of neoliberalism in higher education, and in many ways, the adjuncts' experiences demonstrate an increased level of marketization. When student enrollment numbers and profit take precedence, adjuncts are limited in their ability to teach, research and engage with professional development. The potential implication is the delivery of an impoverished education that promotes market-efficient training (Nussbaum, 2010; Giroux, 2015) while perhaps compromising academic practice, particularly in assessment.

The findings have highlighted the importance of researching the issue further. Though it was small in size, conducting this research had me critically reflect on the topic's complexity. New questions of labor rights, women and work, and pedagogical practice continually emerged as I evaluated the data and literature. Looking forward, the intersection of adjunct labor conditions at branch campuses is an area ripe for further investigation. As a result of the research, it is recommended that home campuses take a more involved approach in the contractual conditions of employees working under their home campus 'brand' overseas, and that branch campuses consider the ways in which professional development opportunities and research communities might benefit teaching practice, develop cross-cultural knowledge, and address students' needs.

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