

# An Investigation on Part-time Foreign Language Teachers

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**Abstract.** Foreign language teachers are investigated by means of questionnaire, to investigate the situations of doing part-time job. The result is that it is a universal phenomenon for foreign language teachers to take part-time job. This paper analyzes the reasons why the phenomenon appears and the problems brought about by it. The reasons are: economic interests, life pressure and lack of school management. The problems are: affecting teaching activities, affecting research activities and affecting improving teachers' professional level. Therefore, measures of solving the problems are putting forward: enhancing the sense of responsibility of teachers, improving the treatment of teachers, building a research platform and strengthening management on part-time teachers.

## 1. Research background

American College part-time teachers began in the first public junior college (community college's predecessor) in 1901. From the beginning of the 1960s, the United States entered the popularization of higher education. The size, function and courses of community colleges were diversified, the number of schools and students increased sharply, resulting in heavier financial burden on community colleges and lack of teachers (Yang Bin & Li Ling 2004) [1]. Therefore, there were more and more part-time teachers working in the colleges. Since 1999, colleges and universities expanded enrollment and higher education shifted from elite education to public education. With the appearance of private colleges, college faculty shortage problems emerged, resulting in the birth of a number of part-time teachers. The author investigated the situation of foreign language teachers doing part-time job, analyzed the reasons resulting in the situation and the problems of doing part-time job by foreign language teachers and put forward some measures, aiming at providing advice to solve college faculty shortage problems.

## 2. Research method

The research used the method of questionnaire, and the subjects are foreign language teachers in Jilin Agricultural University, Jilin University, Jilin Jianzhu University and Changchun University. The contents of the questionnaire include the experience of doing part-time job, the situation of the part-time teachers, the purposes of doing part-time job, the attitudes of universities towards the teachers doing part-time job and the nature of the universities employing teachers doing part-time job. Among 150 questionnaires delivered, 138 were collected, and the effective rate is 92.00%.

## 3. Result statistics and analysis

### 3.1 The experience of the teachers doing part-time job

The result is shown in table 1.

Table 1 Experience of doing part-time job

Item	Yes	No
N	90	48
Proportion (%)	65.22	34.78

As is shown in table 1, among the subjects, 90 foreign language teachers have the experience of doing part-time job, the proportion is 65.22%, which indicates that most foreign language teachers have the experience of doing part-time job, and this is the common phenomenon.

### 3.2 The situation of the teachers doing part-time job

The result is shown in table 2

Table 2 Ages and titles

Item	Age			Title			
	Aged	Middle-aged	Youth	Professor	Vice-professor	Lecturer	Assistant
N	0	18	72	0	6	68	16
Proportion (%)	0	20.00	80.00	0	6.67	75.56	17.77

From table 2, we can see that the number of the young teachers doing part-time job is 72, the proportion is 80.00%. The teacher group doing part-time job is mainly young teachers, among whom the lectures is 68, and the proportion is 75.56%, which indicates that the teachers with the title lecture are the larger number doing part-time job. This is probably because foreign language teachers are young with lower technical titles.

### 3.3 The purpose of doing part-time job

The result is shown in table 3.

Table 3 Purposes of doing part-time job

Item	Exploiting professional expertise	Increasing personal income	Avoiding wasting spare time	Expanding influence
N	18	63	9	0
Proportion (%)	20.00	70.00	10.00	0

As is shown in table 3, the purposes of doing part-time job for foreign language teachers are various, however, the number of the teachers for increasing personal income is 63, the proportion is 70.00%, indicating that most teachers doing part-time for the purpose of making money.

### 3.4 The attitude of the universities towards the teachers doing part-time job

The result is shown in table 4.

Table 4 Attitude of the universities

Item	Prohibiting	Supporting	Ignoring
N	31	30	77
Proportion (%)	22.46	21.74	55.80

As is shown in table 4, although the attitudes of the universities towards the teachers doing part-time job are different, the total number of the foreign language teachers whose university's attitudes towards doing part-time job are supporting and ignoring is 107, and the proportion is 77.54%. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that the universities don't manage the teachers doing part-time job well.

### 3.5 The nature of the universities employing teachers doing part-time job

The result is shown in table 5.

Table 5 Nature of the universities

Item	Public	Private
N	9	81
Proportion (%)	10.00	90.00

As is shown in table 5, private universities are building up from nothing, it is impossible for them to build a full-time faculty with complete disciplines, reasonable structure and high level of teaching and research. To ensure continuously increasing teaching quality and level, private universities have to employ part-time teachers from public universities (Zhu Gui yuan 2007)[2].

## 4. The reasons of the foreign language teachers doing part-time job

### 4.1 Economic interests

Foreign language learning is popular in China, which demands a large number of foreign language teachers, and college English teachers not only have rich experiences in teaching and

knowledge but also have plenty of spare time, which provides objective condition for the teachers to do part-time job (Wang Yan 2007)[3]. As far as economic interests are concerned, there are two aspects.

One is the subjective. Among the universities investigated, Jilin University doesn't offer hour remuneration to the teachers, while Jilin Agricultural University, Jilin Jianzhu University and Changchun University offer the teachers hour remuneration on the condition that the teachers have finished the task assigned by the universities and they have done extra work. However, the amount of the hour remuneration is much lower than that offered by the private universities employing the part-time teachers. Therefore, there exist a large number of young teachers doing part-time job. The other is objective, the research result showed that 90.00% foreign language teachers doing part-time job in private universities. One reason is that private universities have short period of school history and the faculty is weak, and the most important reason is that one of the aims for the private universities running school is to make the biggest profit. In Jilin province, the private university pays a lecturer doing part-time job 28,000 yuan (RMB) each year if he/she has finished 400 hours, 70 yuan (RMB) per hour. If the private university employs a full-time teacher with the title lecturer, it will pay about 45,000 yuan (RMB) excluding retirement insurance, medical service insurance, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation insurance, maternity insurance and housing common reserve fund. Therefore, private universities would like to employ part-time teachers instead of full-time teachers to finish teaching tasks. James C. Palmer (1999) [4] said that one farsighted American analyst stated in 1970 that as long as the community college administrators were legally restricted, as an effective way to save money, they will continue to employ low-wage part-time teachers. Therefore, the number of part-time teachers will become more and more. Christine Maitland and Gary Rhoades (2005) [5] believed that universities were becoming academic capitalist enterprises, pursuing increased revenue and lower production labor costs. Therefore, in order to reduce running costs and maximize economic benefit, it is inevitable for universities in particular, private universities to employ part-time foreign language teachers.

#### **4.2 Life pressure**

The research result indicates that foreign language teachers doing part-time job are mainly young teachers with the title lecturer, the purpose of doing part-time job is obviously to increase personal income. The reason is that general living conditions of university teachers are low compared with the high-paying sectors of society. In addition, at present uneven distribution of benefits is more serious and there is no healthy competitive mechanism (Li Qingfeng & Lu Lan 1998)[6]. Now young teachers with the title lecturer mainly began to work after 1998; they didn't enjoy government welfare housing benefits; most of them have already had their own families; cost of living is high and they have to buy houses, pay for children's education, support their parents etc. So these foreign language teachers have huge life pressure. In order to meet the needs of life, they have to do part-time job. Therefore, doing part-time job for foreign language teachers in universities is a common phenomenon.

#### **4.3 Lack of school management**

The research result shows that the attitude of the universities investigated towards teachers doing part-time job is ignoring because there are the policies: "Scientific and Technological Progress Law" promulgated in July, 1993 and "Opinions on Universities fully Playing the Role of Scientific and Technological Innovation" jointly made by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology in June, 2002. The introduction of the policies provides basis for university teachers to do part-time job (Zheng Lulin 2007) [7]. Therefore, universities' attitude towards the teachers doing part-time jobs is ignoring, and the lack of school management results in many teachers doing part-time job.

### **5. The problems caused by doing part-time job**

#### **5.1 Affecting teaching activities**

Some teachers who do part-time job can not carry out their own teaching tasks well, resulting in decline in the quality of their work. Because of limited time, part-time teachers can't study

textbooks well; their teaching effect is not ideal; their work ethic is poor and their sense of responsibility is not strong (Zhang Yanfang & Wang Xiaoying 2009) [8]. More seriously, some teachers regard part-time job more important than their own full-time job, putting more energy and time on part-time job instead of full-time job, which brings negative effect on regular teaching activities.

### **5.2 Affecting research activities**

Part-time teachers are busy teaching from university to university. They spend a large amount of time on teaching activities and less time on research activities. Therefore, part-time teachers don't have sufficient time to do researches and writing papers. Besides, it is difficult for foreign language teachers to apply for research projects, more difficult to have papers published in core journals and the most difficult is to be awarded technical titles. Therefore, foreign language teachers have the tendency to give up doing researches, which seriously affects research activities.

### **5.3 Affecting improving teachers' professional level**

Apart from doing full-time job, foreign language teachers have to teach in other universities, they even have more teaching task in doing part-time job than doing full-time job in order to earn more money. Therefore, they don't have more time to improve their professional level.

## **6. Measures to solving the problems**

### **6.1 Enhancing the sense of responsibility of teachers**

Although in today's society, "money worship" is rather serious, teachers should focus on their jobs, make progress in educational practice, and take part in more research activities. Teachers should take "role models" as the teachers' primary professional ethics standard, and regard "dedication and diligence," as the core of teachers' professional ethics construction; teachers should take "loving all students" as a sacred duty of teachers' professional morality and take "lifelong learning" concept as the soul of teachers' professional morality (Wang Nan 2009) [9]. Foreign language teachers' influence on students is very large because they teach students for two years. Therefore, foreign language teachers should be fully aware of their responsibility and historic mission.

### **6.2 Improving the treatment of teachers**

Universities should introduce some incentives to encourage full-time teachers. Universities should increase efforts to reward those teachers who put all their energy and spend all their time on their own work instead of doing part-time job.

### **6.3 Building a research platform**

It is difficult to apply for research projects in social sciences compared with natural sciences, so universities should create conditions for foreign language teachers to doing researches. For example, colleges and universities should offer preferential policies to foreign language teachers in the application of scientific research, and the opportunity should be given to outstanding young teachers with the title lecturer to apply for the provincial education reform projects so that they can spend their spare time and put their energy into doing research. This will not only make foreign language teachers not have time and more energy to do part-time job, but they also can improve their own research capabilities and professional level, thus improving the quality of teaching.

### **6.4 Strengthening management on part-time teachers**

To strengthen the management doesn't mean banning, but means developing a number of related policies so that part-time teachers at the premise of finishing their own work exploit professional expertise to help solve the problem of the shortage of foreign language teachers in a number of private colleges and universities. Universities should make efforts to put an end to the phenomenon that some teachers regard part-time job as their first occupation.

## **7. Conclusion**

In short, it is inevitable for foreign language teachers to do part-time job in college universities, but these colleges and universities should strengthen the management, which makes foreign

language teachers give priority to their own job. Without affecting their own work, foreign language teachers are encouraged to do part-time job, which will not only help teachers to exploit their professional expertise, increase personal income, at the same time help private colleges and universities to solve the shortage of foreign language teachers, realizing social value of foreign language teachers.

## 8. References

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