

The Communication and Coordination Roles of University Teaching Secretaries in Evaluation and Construction Work and Pathways for Competence Enhancement

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the Ministry of Education's promotion of the undergraduate education and teaching review and evaluation of regular institutions of higher education from 2021 to 2025, teaching secretaries in universities have played an increasingly important role in evaluation and construction work. Their communication and coordination abilities directly affect the quality and efficiency of such work. Based on a review of the job responsibilities of teaching secretaries and the requirements of evaluation and construction work, this paper analyzes the communication and coordination roles of teaching secretaries from three dimensions: "information transmitter," "resource integrator," and "conflict mediator." Meanwhile, in light of practical conditions, this paper discusses the major problems currently faced by teaching secretaries in communication and coordination. Finally, improvement suggestions are proposed from the perspectives of institutional support, training enhancement, digital empowerment, and incentive mechanisms, with the aim of providing reference for universities to improve the quality of evaluation and construction work.

Keywords: Teaching secretary; Evaluation and construction work; Communication and coordination; Review and evaluation; Competence enhancement

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1. Introduction

Educational evaluation constitutes an important component of the quality assurance system in higher education institutions. In January 2021, the Ministry of Education issued the "Implementation Plan for the Review and Evaluation of Undergraduate Education and Teaching in Regular Institutions of Higher Education (2021–2025)," which clearly put forward the basic principles of "promoting construction, reform, management, and strengthening through evaluation." The document emphasizes that higher education institutions should gradually develop a quality culture characterized by self-awareness, self-reflection, self-discipline, self-inspection, and self-correction^[1].

Against the current development context, the post value of teaching secretaries in colleges and universities keeps

emerging. Working on the front line of teaching management, they serve as an important bridge linking university functional departments, faculties, teachers and students. For one thing, they are required to efficiently transmit various work arrangements issued by administrative departments such as the Academic Affairs Office; for another, they collect and sort opinions and information from faculties, teachers and students, and coordinate collaborative affairs between different departments^[2]. In the work of undergraduate teaching evaluation and construction, teaching secretaries have to handle a great many daily chores, including document consolidation, data checking, ledger establishment, pre-inspection preparation and expert reception. It is evident that the communication and coordination capacity of teaching secretaries directly influences the quality of evaluation documents and determines the orderly advancement of all evaluation-related work.

Based on the above considerations, this paper, in light of the policy background of the new round of review and evaluation as well as the practical needs of university teaching management, examines the role positioning of teaching secretaries in evaluation and construction work, analyzes the practical problems they currently face, and proposes targeted pathways for competence enhancement. It is hoped that this study can provide a useful reference for improving teaching management in higher education institutions.

2. Literature review and theoretical foundation

2.1. Review of research on university teaching secretaries

Existing studies have produced relatively rich findings on the functional positioning of teaching secretaries. Hao Yanan et al. (2021) argue that teaching secretaries in the new era are not only administrators but also service providers and coordinators, and that they need to strike a balance between standardized implementation and flexible handling of affairs^[3]. From the perspective of standardization, Tang Yuanlin (2022) proposes that the development of teaching secretary teams should be based on a unified competency standard system, with communication and coordination competence incorporated into the scope of core professional qualities^[4]. Huang Xin (2022) points out that insufficient institutional incentives may weaken teaching secretaries' initiative in communication and responsibility-taking, and suggests improving incentive mechanisms to enhance their work motivation^[5]. Ma Ange (2024) further focuses on changes in the work of teaching secretaries in the context of digitalization, arguing that information-processing ability and the application of digital tools will become important competencies for teaching secretaries in the future^[6].

Overall, existing research provides a sound theoretical basis for this study. These studies indicate that the work of teaching secretaries is no longer limited to routine administrative affairs; rather, it increasingly emphasizes management services, organizational coordination, and information integration capabilities.

2.2. Research on evaluation and construction work and teaching management

Some studies, from the perspective of information management, have pointed out that teaching secretaries undertake important functions in evaluation and construction work, including information aggregation, document organization, and process coordination. These functions are, to some extent, irreplaceable^[4]. The study by Xu Yingyuan (2022) also shows that, when preparing evaluation and construction materials, teaching secretaries often face problems such as tight deadlines, scattered sources of materials, and multiple levels of coordination. There is an evident relationship between their information-processing ability and the quality of their work^[7].

2.3. Theoretical framework of communication and coordination competence

Communication and coordination competence is an important component of modern managerial capability. In the context of university administration, teaching secretaries communicate with a relatively complex range of subjects: they need to work with faculty members, liaise with functional departments of the university, and respond to the practical needs of students. Since different groups vary in identity, needs, and modes of expression, the communication and coordination work of teaching secretaries is characterized by considerable complexity.

A review of existing studies shows that current discussions on the communication and coordination competence of teaching secretaries mostly remain at a general descriptive level, with relatively limited in-depth analysis based on the specific procedures of evaluation and construction work. In addition, suggestions for improving such competence are often presented from a macro perspective, lacking practical and operational measures that correspond to the characteristics of different stages of evaluation and construction work. Starting from this research gap, this paper attempts to analyze the communication and coordination competence of teaching secretaries within the specific context of evaluation and construction work.

3. Analysis of the communication and coordination roles of teaching secretaries in evaluation and construction work

3.1. Information transmitters: Key nodes in multi-level communication

During the whole cycle of teaching evaluation and construction, the quality of information delivery directly determines the steady implementation of relevant tasks. Serving as an intermediary between the Academic Affairs Office and various departments, teaching secretaries undertake two-way information communication. For downward communication, they accurately deliver evaluation rules, time schedules and document compiling standards to teachers of all majors; for upward reporting, they collect data submitted by departments and teachers, sort out standardized evaluation files and submit them to competent functional departments.

To qualify for the post, teaching secretaries ought to avoid mechanically forwarding documents and master the capabilities of screening, sorting and summarizing information. Faced with numerous notifications and document submission requirements, they should sort out core tasks, prioritize work items and remind relevant teachers and departments punctually to improve information transmission efficiency^[2]. Moreover, upward information feedback is also vital. Since evaluation documents involve multiple disciplines, departments and teachers, secretaries need to summarize, check and classify materials to guarantee the submitted files are accurate, complete and logically consistent^[4].

3.2. Resource integrators: Important facilitators of cross-departmental collaboration

Teaching evaluation and construction is a systematic project that a single department cannot finish. It requires cooperation of multiple functional divisions, including Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Finance, Research Administration, Student Affairs, and the Library, with each department responsible for submitting supporting data and documents. As grassroots teaching administrators, departmental teaching secretaries act on behalf of their respective faculties to communicate with various administrative departments and facilitate the centralized integration of all evaluation information and resources.

In practice, teaching secretaries are expected to deliver comprehensive coordination. First of all, they arrange the timetable for document compilation in line with the overall evaluation schedule to avoid last-minute rush work. Secondly, they coordinate workforce by uniting specialty leaders, classroom teachers and administrative staff to complete document compilation, self-examination and rectification collaboratively. Thirdly, they gather scattered materials from different departments and staff members to establish a standardized and complete archive system for evaluation and construction^[6].

3.3. Conflict mediators: Regulators among multiple stakeholder demands

Characterized by heavy workloads, elaborate assessment criteria and tight deadlines, the teaching evaluation and construction project tends to trigger various contradictions in practice. For instance, quite a number of teachers view document compilation as an extra burden; different faculties hold divergent interpretations of evaluation standards; and specifications released by functional departments sometimes fail to match the practical operation of grassroots departments. Standing at the focal point of such conflicts, teaching secretaries are tasked with conflict mediation and overall coordination.

As intermediaries for dispute settlement, teaching secretaries resolve misunderstandings, ease strained working

relations and facilitate solutions via efficient communication. Accordingly, apart from proficient communication skills, they are also supposed to be equipped with empathy, emotion regulation and strong psychological resilience.

4. Practical challenges in the communication and coordination competence of university teaching secretaries

4.1. The gap between information-processing competence and evaluation requirements

The new round of review and evaluation has set higher requirements for the systematicity, accuracy, and standardization of evaluation materials. However, in actual work, some teaching secretaries lack systematic training in teaching management before taking up their positions and do not yet have a sufficiently in-depth understanding of evaluation policy documents and indicator systems. As a result, omissions, misunderstandings, or non-standard expressions may occur in the process of information transmission and material organization, thereby affecting the quality of the submitted materials. The empirical study by Li Ziling (2023) also finds that some teaching secretaries have insufficient information integration competence when dealing with evaluation-related information involving multiple departments and dimensions, which may easily lead to errors or inconsistencies in submitted materials ^[8].

At the same time, with the continuous advancement of informatization in higher education institutions, evaluation and construction work have become increasingly dependent on digital management platforms. Teaching secretaries are expected not only to organize paper-based materials but also to use academic affairs systems, data platforms, and document collaboration tools proficiently. Ma Ange (2024) points out that teaching secretaries in different universities vary in their mastery of academic affairs management systems. Some still encounter considerable difficulties in data export, comparison, and verification during the evaluation and construction period, which may also reduce the efficiency of evaluation-related work ^[6].

4.2. Inadequate cross-departmental coordination mechanisms and limited coordination effectiveness

Teaching secretaries have to communicate across various departments frequently amid evaluation and construction, yet institutional restrictions persist in practical work. For one thing, as grassroots administrators, they possess no official authority to push inter-departmental cooperation, so most coordination has to rely on private contacts and informal consultations ^[9]. For another, many colleges have not built sound, specialized coordination systems for evaluation work. Poor information exchange between functional divisions creates information silos and hinders the efficiency of document collection.

Such drawbacks originate from flawed horizontal administrative coordination mechanisms of universities. In the busy rush of evaluation preparation, secretaries need to coordinate with Human Resources, Finance, Research Management and the Library at the same time, while these departments differ greatly in their understanding, cooperation initiative and response efficiency toward evaluation tasks.

4.3. Narrow career development channels and insufficient motivation for competence enhancement

Career development opportunities influence individuals' enthusiasm for continuous learning and competence enhancement. In practice, however, teaching secretaries often have relatively limited career advancement channels. Since the position of teaching secretary is commonly regarded as an administrative support role, it is difficult for them to obtain promotion to senior professional titles through research achievements in the same way as full-time faculty members. Moreover, they often lack a clear pathway for administrative promotion. Over time, some outstanding teaching secretaries may remain in the same position for a long period, with limited opportunities for further development.

Huang Xin's (2022) study indicates that the weak connection between remuneration and work performance is one of the important factors affecting the work motivation of teaching secretaries. Some teaching secretaries may gradually develop a negative attitude that "doing more or less makes little difference, and doing well or poorly leads to the same

result”^[5]. When teaching secretaries believe that competence enhancement cannot bring corresponding career rewards, their motivation for active learning and self-improvement will weaken, thereby affecting their professional development. This problem becomes particularly evident in high-intensity and high-standard tasks such as evaluation and construction work.

5. Pathways for enhancing the communication and coordination competence of university teaching secretaries

5.1. Improving institutional support and establishing a coordination mechanism for evaluation and construction work

To help teaching secretaries give full play to their communication and coordination roles, priority should be given to improving institutional safeguards. At the preliminary preparation phase of evaluation and construction, universities need to specify job duties, available powers and coordinating procedures for teaching secretaries to prevent the mismatch of responsibilities and corresponding authority. Colleges can develop a three-tier linkage coordination framework: school leaders in charge of teaching exercise overall leadership, the Academic Affairs Office takes charge of overall arrangement, and each faculty undertakes specific implementation. Such arrangements can rationalize responsibility allocation at all levels and standardize information delivery channels.

For horizontal cross-department cooperation, institutions can set up a regular joint-meeting mechanism for evaluation work. Relevant departments, including Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Finance, Scientific Research Administration, and Student Affairs, can hold periodic seminars to jointly resolve common difficulties emerging throughout the evaluation process.

5.2. Strengthening systematic training to improve professional information-processing competence

In response to the insufficient information-processing competence of teaching secretaries, universities should establish a differentiated and continuous training mechanism. The training content may include three modules. The first is the policy understanding module, which focuses on explaining the policy background, indicator system, evaluation logic, and material requirements of review and evaluation, so as to help teaching secretaries truly understand the key points and internal requirements of evaluation and construction work. The second is the skills enhancement module, which focuses on practical skills such as the operation of academic affairs management systems, data statistics and analysis, spreadsheet processing, and standardized document organization. The third is the communication skills module, which may improve teaching secretaries' abilities in expression, listening, feedback, and coordination in different scenarios through case analysis, situational simulation, and experience sharing.

In terms of training methods, universities should not rely solely on centralized lectures. They may invite experienced teaching management personnel to provide demonstration-based training, organize teaching secretaries to visit universities or schools with rich experience in evaluation and construction work for exchange and learning, and establish experience-sharing platforms for teaching secretaries, thereby promoting the dissemination of effective practices within the university^[7].

5.3. Promoting digital empowerment to improve the efficiency of informatized coordination

Against the ongoing digital upgrade of higher education, adopting digital tools to boost teaching secretaries' coordination efficiency has become an inevitable choice for universities. Institutions can build a dedicated digital platform for evaluation work to support online document submission, real-time progress monitoring, cross-department data sharing and online collaborative editing, cutting extra communication expenses brought by fragmented information and unclear workflows.

In detail, colleges can develop an automatic alert system that regularly reminds relevant staff of pending assignments, submission deadlines and document completion status. Besides, a shared material database allows various departments to check, revise and supplement evaluation files anytime. Furthermore, with data visualization functions, teaching secretaries

can rapidly generate progress charts, problem inventories and rectification records, making daily work more transparent and traceable.

5.4. Broadening career development channels and establishing a diversified incentive mechanism

To fundamentally inspire teaching secretaries to upgrade their professional capabilities, universities ought to formulate refined incentive systems. First of all, schools should perfect career paths by introducing a dual promotion system consisting of administrative advancement and specialized professional development. They can create tiered posts ranging from junior, middle, to senior teaching management specialists, and factor coordination outcomes, document quality, and task fulfillment in evaluation work into promotion assessments.

For tangible rewards, core benchmarks including evaluation performance, submission accuracy and coordination efficiency can be embedded into performance reviews, with financial benefits granted to high-performing secretaries^[5]. As for spiritual incentives, honors like Excellent Teaching Administrator and Outstanding Individual in Accreditation Preparation can be awarded, and departments can hold regular commendations for contributors to boost their professional pride and job recognition. Clear career prospects and recognized work value are essential to sustain their willingness to keep improving personal competency.

6. Conclusion and prospects

Based on the policy background of the new round of undergraduate education and teaching review and evaluation promoted by the Ministry of Education from 2021 to 2025, this paper analyzes the three communication and coordination roles undertaken by university teaching secretaries in evaluation and construction work, namely “information transmitter,” “resource integrator,” and “conflict mediator.” It further discusses the practical challenges currently faced by teaching secretaries in performing these roles. On this basis, this paper proposes pathways for competence enhancement from the perspectives of institutional support, systematic training, digital empowerment, and incentive mechanisms.

The study argues that the effectiveness of teaching secretaries’ communication and coordination in evaluation and construction work is not determined solely by individual competence. Rather, it is influenced by multiple factors, including the institutional environment, interdepartmental collaboration, incentive mechanisms, support from digital tools, and psychological resilience. Therefore, improving the communication and coordination competence of teaching secretaries requires joint efforts from the university, schools or departments, and teaching secretaries themselves. At the university level, institutional support and incentive mechanisms should be improved. At the school or department level, daily support and resource provision should be strengthened. At the individual level, teaching secretaries should take the initiative to study relevant policies, become familiar with work procedures, and enhance their digital literacy and communication skills.

Admittedly, this paper also has certain limitations. First, it is mainly based on literature review and theoretical analysis, and thus lacks support from large-scale questionnaire surveys or case interviews. Therefore, the generalizability of its conclusions remains to be further verified. Future studies may conduct more systematic and in-depth case research based on the evaluation and construction practices of specific universities, so as to clarify the relationship between teaching secretaries’ communication and coordination competence and the quality of evaluation and construction work. Second, as technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data are rapidly entering the field of educational administration, the working methods of teaching secretaries are bound to transform. Therefore, how to use new technologies to improve the efficiency of communication and coordination in evaluation and construction work will naturally become an important direction for future research.

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