

Complaints on Secretary Science Teaching Content and Social Context in China

Ruihui Han

Humanities School, Jinan University, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China

*Corresponding Author

Ruihui Han

Email: hanruihuihh@hotmail.com

Abstract: There are many complaints and dissatisfaction in the secretary science class in China high schools. In order to solve the problems, some teachers suggested to invite the experienced secretaries to teaching for some classes or prolong the practical time of this course. However, those measures cannot solve the problems thoroughly. The aim of this study was to investigate the teaching content of secretary science course. The research is based on the analysis of conflict between the secretary science teaching content and the practical need of secretary position. The findings showed that most of the teaching contents in secretary science course are unsuitable for the secretary position, which is more complicated than the common teaching materials describe. However, many other courses, especially Chinese language and literature courses in secretary science major, meet the need of secretary practical works. The secretary science major is set up in Chinese language and literature department in most of schools which has secretary science major. That makes up the shortcomings of the secretary science course, which is a compulsory course in secretary science major. The study implies the conflicts between the teaching contents and the practical need of secretary position are caused by the complicated social context.

Keywords: secretary science; teaching content; teaching material; secretary position; guanxi; social background

INTRODUCTION

Both the teachers and students would complain the teaching content of mishuxue (secretary science) in teaching process in China. For the teacher, he or she would find the teaching content in the teaching materials was too simple to teach, and for the student, he or she would find that the teaching content is too simple to learn. But, as the coral course in secretary major, secretary science is a compulsory for the student to learn.

Mishu (secretary) is ubiquitous in China politics [1]. Secretary is common in government, school, company, factory, institution, army and others in China. Secretary position is almost compulsory in every organization in China, therefore, the secretary major is one popular in China high school correspondingly. In almost every of the universities in China, there would be the secretary major. Ordinarily, the secretary major is set in Chinese language and literature department, and the teachers of mishuxue would be the ones who major in Chinese literature and language [2]. For the teachers of mishuxue, the course would not be as important as their majors, so they would not spend so much time to prepare the course as they do for other courses. For the students of secretary major, the main courses for them are of Chinese language and literature. So secretary major is the marginal course in secretary major actually, although this course is regarded as the coral course in secretary

major. Along with its too simple teaching content, secretary science is in the dilemma in secretary major.

But secretary science is one long-existing course in secretary major. The theoretical secretary science in China high school appeared in 1980s, and the secretary major was also set in the universities of China in that time [3]. Until now, the secretary major is welcomed by the applicants when they choose the major after college entrance examination. However, when the students learn the secretary science, they would disappoint generally. Although that does not mean those students cannot get their job smoothly, such course seemingly would waste the time of both the teachers and students.

This paper set out to investigate the secretary science course's condition in secretary major. This paper is structured as follows. It begins by describing the complaining and the corresponding causes in the secretary science course. Then it discusses on development of secretary major in modern China. It would find that the setting-up of secretary major in China is because of the need of secretaries in many organizations. In the process, the model of curriculum of Soviet Union influenced the secretary major's courses. However, the secretary major is set in Chinese language and literature department in most of the high schools, and most of the learning content for the secretary major students is about Chinese language and literature in general. The following section describes the

historical department of secretary occupation in China. It would find that, in general, the secretary occupation in China history had much to do with the paper work. Until in contemporary times, the secretary occupation is mainly about the paper work, especially for the secretaries in government. Therefore, although the secretary science is deemed as the coral course in secretary science superficially, it is marginal actually. The next section discusses on the complicated work of secretary, especially the guanxi in the secretary's actual daily works. The students cannot learn the guanxi knowledge in the secretary science, however, they can learn it in Chinese language and literature, which contain abundant Chinese culture knowledge. Lastly, the paper analyzes the conflicts between curriculum arrangement and the need of the society. The curriculum arrangement in contemporary China high school was mainly learned from the western world, however, that would not accord with the need of society in the cultural background of China.

The dissatisfaction for the secretary science course

Both the teachers and students in secretary science class would not be satisfied by the teaching content. According to the teaching requirement, secretary science course should teach the students about the fundamentals of secretary science, the daily works and the secretary writing knowledge [4]. Most of the secretary science teaching materials are about such content. The fundamentals of secretary science include the research object and goal of secretary science, the relationship between secretary science and other disciplines, the reformation, characteristics, function, principles, requirements and the reformation trend; the daily works of secretary include the characteristics, mission, principle, procedure and method; the secretary writings include the fundamental knowledge and routine writing skills [4].

The teaching content seems reasonable, however, for most of the teachers and students, the content is too simple to teach and learn, or the content does not have the practical value. The daily works introduced by the course is so simple that the students only need a night to know well such knowledge. The fundamentals does not have the practical value. The writing knowledge has been learned thoroughly and systematically in document writing course which is an another course in secretary science major.¹

The teaching content does not need too much time to learn, nevertheless, secretary science is not only one compulsory course, but also occupies 36 lessons,

¹ The secretary major in high school has a special course, document writing, to teach the students about the secretary writings.

which is too long to learn such simple content.² So both the teachers and students consider the course is dull and tedious, therefore, complaints arise.

Ever since the setup of secretary major in 1990s, teaching content of secretary science has not changed in decades, although the complaints existed from the 1990s until now. In order to cope with the difficulties in the teaching, sometimes the teachers adopted some measures such as inviting the experienced secretaries who worked in government to give the students the lessons, or increasing the time for the practice of secretary major students. The methods have effects to some extent, however, the complaints always exist, as the course is mainly taught in classroom.

The changing of teaching contents and its effect

There was once a time that the teaching content of secretary science arose students' fancy. In 1983, the teachers in Liberation Army of Xi'an Institution of Politics, Wang Huaizhi and Guo Zheng, found that the teaching contents of secretary science was not enough to cope with the real problems in secretary daily works. They decided to change the teaching content. Therefore, Guo Zheng gave the students lessons, which contained the real problems he and Wang Huaizhi had experienced or heard of, and Guo Zheng recorded and edited the teaching contents. Soon the draft of one book, *Canmou zhushou lun: wei shouzhang fuwu de yishu (Adviser and Assistant: the Art of Serving the Leader)*, was finished.

The students were extremely interested by teaching contents, as long as Guo Zheng taught in classroom, the students congested in the aisles in classroom, the corridors beside the classroom and beside the windows. They never had heard about such teaching content before. However, one supervisor of the institution noticed the condition, he criticized the phenomenon in one meeting: "Some of the old comrades and professors do not have enough principles when they teach, and they said some unsuitable words, therefore, we should reinforce the censorship on the teaching" [4, 5] From that time on, the teaching contents never appeared in classroom.

But as a result of the teaching, one book *Canmou zhushou lun: wei shouzhang fuwu de yishu (Adviser and Assistant: the Art of Serving the Leader)* was published. Only three thousand copies were printed, and most of the copies were distributed in the army. Nevertheless, the books were so welcomed in the readers that some of the students of Guo Zheng advised

² In China high schools, one lesson is about 45 minutes.

Guo Zheng to get the book republished. Guo Zheng refused politely. Since the internet facilitates the circulation of knowledge, many readers could download the book from internet. From the publishing of the book until 2011, the download times of the book was more than 27 times of the copy numbers of the publishing copies [5]. In 2012, the book got republished, and from 2012 until 2014, the book had been reprinted for six times. That indicates the book was extremely welcomed in the readers. However, the book still cannot be the teaching material in classroom of high schools.

The content of *Adviser and Assistant: the Art of Serving the Leader*

Adviser and Assistant: the Art of Serving the Leader describes 27 aspects of secretary works and problems. Those aspects includes how to assist the leader's decision-making, how to deny the opinions of the leader, how to send the falsehood to the leader, how to cope with the conflicts among the leaders, how to arrange the meeting, how to draft a speech for the leader and others. The book also discusses on what the secretary principle is and the problems the secretary should concern [6].

The difference of *Adviser and Assistant* with other kinds of teaching materials of secretary science is that it focuses on the relationship between the leader and secretary. In the other words, this book focuses on how to maintain the good relationship between secretary and leader. Relationship, which can be called as *guanxi* in China context, is a kind of important social interpersonal communication. There is no corresponding word describes such unique interpersonal communication in western culture, so in academic circle, a unique Chinese word, *guanxi*, is to describe such concept. *Guanxi* refers the connection between two independent bodies, with the purpose of promoting mobility and social transaction between two sides. In the process, the reciprocal benefit and continuance of *guanxi* is the mutual pursuit of the *guanxi*'s participants [7].

The students of secretary science were interested in the teaching content of this book, because the content had vital relationship with their benefit. For the readers who were not secretaries, they were also interested in the content, as the book described the reciprocal relationship between leaders and secretaries, in the context that the secretary corruption is serious in contemporary China [8], besides, those readers could learn some useful knowledge to cope with the leaders and secretaries. Therefore, the teaching content was extremely attractive in Liberation Army of Xi'an Institution of Politics once a time, and the download times of the book from internet was more than 27 times

than the original printed copies of the book in the first publishing.

Compared with *Adviser and Assistant*, most of the other teaching materials of secretary science is mainly about the routine official works of secretary, but not the *guanxi* between leader and secretary, with the dull and simple content, therefore, such teaching materials cannot inspire the interests of the students.

The reason for abandoning *Adviser and Assistant*

The reason for abandoning *Adviser and Assistant* is mainly because of the moral and ideological education requirement in China high schools. The teaching content of *Adviser and Assistant* deviates from the requirement of moral and ideological education requirement.

Traditionally, China is influenced by the Confucian thought profoundly, therefore the moral education, which is one of the critical requirements of Confucian education, still influences the modern China education. China traditional Confucian thinking has both theoretical and practical values for contemporary China education [9].

Moral education is also valued by China government. After the implementing reform and opening up policy, the dramatic economic and social change brought about the more attention of China government on moral education [10]. The economic progress brought about by reform and opening in China has resulted in some serious corruption and social conflict [11], therefore, the moral education will continue to be critical in China high school education, although just only the moral education in high schools cannot solve all the problems.

Morality is also of critical concern in public. The public media in China is on vigilant to and condemns the immorality in China frequently, for example, in 1996, China Youth Daily published one editorial named *Moral Reconstruction and Institution Arrangement* (Daode chongjian yu zhidu anpai), in which the writer said: "some people infringe on and jeer at some social morality intentionally, and make their immoral discourses and activities obvious in order to catch the public attention. They also intentionally humiliate some moral phenomena in order to manifest that they are opposite to morality. In many literary works, the challenges to morality are popular. The so-called literati scorn at morality, just as the riffraff do." [12]. With the urge of the public, the moral education is more necessary in high Schools. *Adviser and Assistant* was deemed as deviating from the moral education requirement in high school teaching, so it was canceled as the teaching material of secretary science.

Why the book deviates from the moral education requirement?

Although describes the real situation or secretary work, it touches the hidden rules and teaches the students hidden rules, therefore, the content of the book deviates from the moral education requirement. The content of the book focuses on the guanxi between secretary and leader, that is, the benefit of the secretary, but not the work itself.

The content of the book is divided into 27 chapters. The first chapter describes the ordeals the secretary faces in the routine works. The second chapter teaches the students that the secretary should get familiar to the personality of the leader. The third chapter discusses on how to assist the leader to make decision. The fourth chapter describes how to perceive the leader's intentions, as some leaders do not express their intentions openly and accurately. The fifth chapter discusses on the measures to maintain the dignity of the leader. The sixth chapter addresses how to perceive the emotions of the leader. The seventh chapter teaches the readers how to deny the opinions of the leader. The eighth chapter addresses how to send the falsehood to the leader. The ninth chapter addresses how to record the speech of the leader. The tenth chapter addresses on the techniques to adopt to the different types of leaders. The eleventh chapter talks about how to endure the shortcomings of the leader. The twelfth chapter addresses on how to provide the private service, which includes the accommodation and food, leisure-time activities and others, to the leader. Such private service is not stipulated by the official document, but in the daily works, the secretary would generally face the problems. The thirteenth chapter discusses on how to perceive the conflicts between the leaders. The fourteenth chapter discusses on how to mitigate the circumstance for the leader. The fifteenth chapter addresses on how to conceal the contradictions among the leaders. The sixteenth chapter addresses on how to pretend to be confused in order to coordinate the leaders' relationship. The seventeenth chapter talks about how to communicate with the leader secretly. The eighteenth chapter addresses on how to delay in order to maintain the leaders' solidarity. The nineteenth chapter discusses on how to help the leader to provide the service to the leader's visitors. The twentieth chapter discusses on how to avoid meeting the leader. The twenty-first chapter discusses on how to assist the leader to organize the meeting. The twenty-second chapter teaches the student how to write the speech for the leader. The twenty-third chapter addresses on the problem of keeping secret. The twenty-fourth chapter addresses on how to decline others for the leader. The twenty-fifth chapter addresses on how to answer the telephone for the leader. The twenty-sixth chapter

addresses on how to cope with the interference of the leader's family numbers to the official activities. The twenty-seventeenth chapter addresses how to cope with the interpersonal relationship with the leader's family number.

From the description above, we can find that this book concentrates on how to satisfy the leader's need, and, superficially, that deviates from the official requirement on the secretary. According to *Introduction to Secretary Science* edited by Lu Yufang, the secretary work contains the document processing, the speech writing, the arrangement of meeting, processing the complaint, arranging the agenda and others [13]. There are no stipulation that the secretary should concentrate on the leader's need in daily works.

The contents of *Adviser and Assistant* also infringes on the normal work of the secretary. For example, Chapter 26 and Chapter 27 address on the problems of leader's family numbers. The students are told that the secretary can achieve their benefit through influencing the leader's family number, who can influence the leader. The other chapters also connotes that, if the secretary wants to achieve their own benefit, including promotion of career and income, they should satisfy the need of the leader firstly. Therefore, the works stipulated officially are not of most importance, and on the contrary, the need of the leader is most important, because the leader is the one who decides the treatment and promotion of the secretary. Traditionally, China is a country of men-ruling society [14]. Even the China ancient legalist school's state of "ruling by law" in ancient China is also another kind of ruling by men [15]. Therefore, since the leader has critical power to decide the treatment and promotion of the secretary, so keeping good relationship with the leader is important for the secretary. Besides, the leader who is in charge of secretary directly is of most importance, just as the popular China proverb "the magistrate is not as effective as the official who is in charge" (xianguan buru xianguan) connotes. So, if the secretary wants to get the benefit, he or she should cope with the leader, who in charge of him or her, firstly. When the secretary tries to satisfy the need of the leader mainly, the normal works will be infringed on.

Corruption is inevitable in the process. As the secretary's pursuit for private benefit, the normal works of the secretary will be infringed on, therefore, the public interests are invaded. Those activities are not only immoral, but also illegal. The content of this teaching material deviates from the moral education requirement in classroom, it teaches the student about the hidden rules, which are not illegal and immoral, although it does not teach the student to infringe on the law and morality.

However, the secretary have to face with the problems how to cope with the relationship with the leader, because such relationship decides the secretary's treatment and promotion, which is the critical to the secretary. Therefore, it can be find that the relationship between the secretary and leader is special. In order to discuss on the classroom problems in secretary science teaching, it is necessary to detail the special relationship between the secretary and the corresponding leader.

The special relationship between the secretary and corresponding leader

The relationship between secretary and corresponding leader is special. Secretary and leader will cooperated with each other for the common interests. The secretary's promotion and treatment depend on the leader, and, simultaneously, the leader depends on the secretary for the official and private matters.

The relationship between secretary and leader is extremely intimate. There is no privacy and nothing hidden between the secretary and leader [1]. The loyalty of the secretary and the leader's trust are studiously created. The mutual interdependence between the secretary and leader is seriously important in their political activities. The mutual interdependence results in the patron-client relationship, and such relationship is an institution rooted in Chinese practice of guanxi [16].

The power of secretary is not limited effectively, so the leader and secretary can make use of the political flaw for their benefit. The secretary system is perhaps the only structure that has not institutionalized, so it remains constant over time [17]. Additionally, the secretary is beyond the scrutiny of the public in most of the cases, as the public attention is drawn by the leader's activities, which shallows the secretary. Therefore, the secretary's position beside the leader provides the secretary with many opportunities to gain profit.

Many of the high officials are promoted from secretary position. Among those, Li Zheng is one typical and famous example. He was promoted from an ordinary secretary position to high official in Hebei province, but was soon found corruption and sentenced to death [16]. When he was the secretary, he could get the confidential messages, which he leaked to the related ones for profit. Therefore, it can find that the secretary is in the vital hub of powers. From the secretary position, the secretary can get the necessary interpersonal relationship and economic support for the higher position. On the other hand, the intimate relationship between the secretary and leader also plays the critical function in the promotion of the secretary.

For the leader, the secretary is also the one critical to his power. When choosing his successor or promoting someone, the leader will make his secretary prior, because the secretary is the one who trust most. Especially before the leader retires, he will choose his secretary for promotion, therefore, his power will remain though the relationship between him and the secretary.

From the description above, it can find that the mutual benefit bounds the secretary and leader together. Therefore, in the practical works, secretary should cope with the guanxi with the leader seriously and cautiously. That is, the practical work of the secretary is not limited to the ordinary document processing, arranging meeting and others. On the contrary, the practical works beyond the description in the general secretary science teaching materials compose the most important part of the secretary career.

The unsuitability and confusion of general secretary science teaching materials

The general secretary science teaching materials are not suitable for the need of the would-be-secretary students, as the real situation of secretary in practice requires the techniques to cope with the relationship with the leader. So both the students and teachers feel discontented with the general teaching materials. So, when the teachers of secretary science used *Adviser and Assistant*, which discusses about the guanxi between the leader and secretary, the students became feverishly interested. But the teaching materials was soon abandoned and now most of the secretary science teaching materials are the common teaching materials, which are same in the content. Thus, the students seemingly do not get the necessary teaching about the interpersonal relationship among the official circle.

However, in most cases, the students get the education about the guanxi in the official circle during they major in the secretary curricula. Some others courses provide the necessary knowledge about that. Most of the secretary majors are set in Chinese language and literature department, although some researchers argue that the secretary major is about the management science [2]. In Chinese language and literature department, the secretary major includes Chinese language and literature courses, the management courses, law and sociology courses and others. Among those courses, Chinese language and literature courses occupy the most. Such courses teach the students about China traditional culture knowledge, which includes the knowledge about guanxi.

Chinese language and literature courses, especially the literature courses, contains much China

traditional culture knowledge, because such courses provide the principles, theories and examples of China traditional culture knowledge. The courses in Chinese language and literature department can be divided into language courses and literature courses. Language courses are about the linguistics and Chinese language studies. The literature courses can be divided into Chinese literature and foreign literature. The Chinese literature courses, which include ancient Chinese literature, modern and contemporary Chinese literature courses, occupy the most the literature courses in Chinese department curricula. The Chinese literature courses provide abundant literary materials, which are mainly influenced by the Confucian thoughts and principles. Therefore, the courses in Chinese department cultivate the students to understand the traditional culture so as to be incorporated into the secretary practices easily.

Besides, the courses of Chinese language and literature teach the students about how to process documents more easily. Although the secretary science materials contain the document processing knowledge, they only introduce about the document processing procedure superficially. The language application decides the quality of document processing, as secretary should write many drafts in their daily work.

It is no wonder that students graduated from Chinese department are deemed more suitable for secretary position, no matter they major in secretary curricula or not. The secretary major is set in Chinese language and literature department generally, and the secretary science is only one course in secretary science major curricula. Its function is to mark the secretary science major, or in other words, to distinguish the major in Chinese language and literature department.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to discuss on the suitability of secretary science course's teaching content in secretary science major in high schools. It has shown that the teaching content of secretary science course is not suitable for the secretary science major. However, as one coral course in secretary science major, secretary science is compulsory. On the other hand, it also marks and distinguishes the secretary science major. There has been rare secretary science teaching material addressed on the real problems of secretary practical works, however, such teaching material was banned because of the moral education requirement. The practical secretary works require plenty knowledge of Chinese culture, as the secretary position is located in the complicated power hub. Chinese language and literature courses meet the need. Therefore, secretary science major is set in the Chinese language and literature department, as one major belonged to Chinese language

and literature department. The results of this study indicate that the conflict between the secretary science teaching content and the need of secretary practical works reflects the complication in secretary position. Such complication is caused by many different benefits of participants, especially the secretary and the corresponding leader. This paper provided a deeper insight into the dissatisfaction with secretary science teaching content in teaching process.

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