

On the Reform of Legislation Curriculum Innovation and Cultivation of Legal Talents: A Case Study of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

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Abstract

With the increasingly growing demand of our times, the curriculum, legislation, as well as its teaching mode has become all the more crucial to cultivate legal talents. After years of reform and innovation in teaching methods, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) has accumulated rich teaching experience and made remarkable achievements ever since the course of legislation was set up. On the one hand, the teaching practice of this course improves the practical ability and relevant understanding of students, particularly the understanding of legal governance environment and legislative status quo in China; on the other hand, it has strengthened the teaching ability of teachers and gradually formed a relatively mature teaching mode with assigned teaching experience and fixed teaching content. Nevertheless, there exists several problems, for instance, inadequate internship positions for students, insufficient legislative research projects, and decentralized direction of legal talents cultivation. In the near future, the key emphasis of the reform and innovation on the legislative curriculum should be put on several aspects, including improving the proportion of the courses in the cultivation of legal talents, continuing to optimize the content of in-class teaching, strengthening the compilation of teaching materials, reinforcing the curriculum based on the demands of local legislative talents as well as deepening

the practical support of in-class teaching.

Key words: Legislation curriculum; Legal talents; Reform and innovation

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With the continuous implementation of comprehensively governing the country according to law, legislation has been enlisted as a main compulsory course of law major among a large variety of universities. As an essential course in the cultivation of legal talents, the teaching requirements of legislation is increasingly growing. It is no longer a pure theoretical subject, but more of a combination of theory and practice. Improving the teaching quality and effect of legislation is the key factor to train qualified legal talents, especially legislative talents. To strengthen the cultivation of legal talents and cultivate more legal workers who are theoretical, practical and capable, we must put more emphasis on the construction of legislative courses.

1. THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE INNOVATION REFORM ON THE LEGISLATION CURRICULUM IN GDUFS

Since 2015, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) has set up the specific curriculum of legislation for undergraduate students in law school and postgraduate students in the majors of constitutional law, administrative law, environmental law and resource law. After years of reform and innovation on the teaching method of the

course, we have accumulated rich teaching experience and made obvious reform achievements, which has laid a solid foundation for further promoting the teaching quality of legislation and cultivation of legislative talents. GDUFs has gained the following experiences in curriculum reform and innovation of legislation:

1.1 The Strengthening of Students' practical ability and relevant understanding of Legislation

The essence of in-class teaching is to center on students, strengthen their understanding and mastery of relevant knowledge. The main target of legislation course is to help students improve students' learning ability and understanding of legal knowledge or legislative knowledge. As a practice-oriented course, it puts much emphasis on the crucial problem, which is, enabling students gain as much practical knowledge and skills as possible. In the practical teaching process, our faculty members, on the one hand, enable students know more about the practical problems in legislative work through elaborating the gains and losses drawn from the experience of specific legislative practical cases; on the other hand, actively create practice opportunities, arrange students to intern regularly or irregularly in the legislative institutions. Through introducing related legislation practice and personal practice, students have a clear understanding of legislative work practice. To some extent, it enriched their practical knowledge, reinforce their practical and work ability, laying a solid foundation for future legislative work after graduation.

1.2 The Improvement of Students' Understanding of Legal Governance Environment and Legislative Status Quo in China

Through the teaching of legislation, especially the introduction of some cases of local legislation, students can have a brand-new understanding of the needs of local rules of law under the social background of the overall implementation of ruling the country according to the law as well as the target of construction of law-governance society. Understanding the obstacles and difficulties encountered in the process of the comprehensive construction of law-governance China is conducive to enabling students to gain the overall understanding of China's legal environment and legislative status quo, enhance relevant knowledge and research according to the status quo of China's legal environment and legislative work, and improve professional skills and literacy in a directed way.

1.3 The Formation of a Relatively Mature Teaching Mode and Experience

After years of reform and innovation in teaching methods, legislation teaching in GDUFs has formed a relatively mature and thorough teaching mode and teaching experience. This course is usually offered in

the second semester for the first year of postgraduate students and the second semester for the third year of undergraduate students. Teaching is mainly carried out through the combination of teachers' lectures and students' participation in discussion. During the teaching process, students can interrupt the teachers' lecture at any moment to participate in the discussion. In terms of several questions that interest students, all of them are worthy of discussion. After class, teacher will assign homework according to the teaching content of each class. In the final assessment, each student is required to submit a course paper based on the knowledge learned. Generally speaking, students can acquire relevant knowledge in a semester, thus achieving the effect of teaching and realizing the target of learning.

1.4 The Formation of Fixed Teaching Content

In terms of teaching content, nine fixed topics have been formed, and each topic takes an average of four class hours. The relevant content covers the following aspects, the concept, principle and due process of legislation; optimal allocation of legislative resources; legislative authorization; challenge system in legislation; the amendment of legislation; record filing; approval; evaluation; legislative technology and so on. These topics are combined with the practical problems existing in local legislation and legislative work in China, including both the differentiation of basic concepts and introduction of macro issues; both the simple elaboration of mistakes in legislation process and profound analysis as well as deep demonstration on complex issue. The content is co-related with each other, thus forming an internal coordinated, systematical integrity. In this way, students are able to gain a relatively clear understanding of the practical problems of Chinese legislation and the issues of the forefront of scientific research.

1.5 The Enhancement of Teaching Ability of Faculty

After several years of teaching practice, we have formed a refined faculty team in teaching and scientific research on the course of legislation. Our team has compiled and published the textbook "*Local Legislation*", held several seminars on the theory and practice of local legislation, and participated in the annual conference of the Association of Legislation of China Law Society (CLS). One of the team members became the vice president of this organization, one became the executive director and two became the council members of it. Our team has published six *Reports on the Development of Local Legislation in China* and seven *Observational Reports on Local Legislation in Guangdong Province*, more than 20 journal articles on legislation. We have undertaken more than 30 research projects on the drafting, evaluation, amendment of legislation. Based on it, the teaching and research abilities of our team have been greatly enhanced,

and the overall level of the group has been significantly improved.

2. THE EXISTING PROBLEMS IN THE INNOVATION REFORM ON THE LEGISLATION CURRICULUM IN GDUFS

2.1 Inadequate Internship Positions for Students to Meet the Demand of Internship

The research object of legislation is the phenomena and problems within legislation. Allowing students to participate in legislative practice and providing them with more internship opportunities will not only improve the effectiveness of in-class teaching, but also help students gain a comprehensive understanding of legislative work and improve their ability to solve legal problems. Due to the relatively small number of legislative institutions, there are too limited internship positions for students to put the theoretical knowledge into practical use. In addition, since legislative work is relatively professional, students can only intern in legislative auxiliary positions, which makes it difficult for them to participate in the discussion of key issues, like drafting, demonstration, deliberation and other core legislative works. Therefore, how to enable students to have more opportunities to participate in the specific practice of legislative work and learn more legislative working skills through practice are the central problems to be solved in the teaching and research reform of this course. However, due to the relatively small number of legislative institutions, this problem is hard to be tackled in essence.

2.2 Insufficient Legislative Research Projects to Guarantee the Participation of All the Students

Although compared with legislation courses offered by other universities, GDUFS has provided students with as many internship positions and opportunities for project participation as possible. However, in view of the requirements of the cultivation of legislative and legal talents, the legislative research projects are still in a limited number, which cannot guarantee the participation of all the undergraduate and postgraduate students. At the same time, due to different levels of projects, students are required to undertake varied assignments. In most cases, students are more engaged in data collection, research assistance and other auxiliary work, but the core work of the project, such as drafting provisions, writing research reports, are beyond the reach of students.

2.3 Decentralized Direction of Legal Talents Cultivation and Failure to Offer a Specified Training

The subject of legislation course is the undergraduate student and postgraduate student who major in law. The employment of these students after graduation mainly

revolves around careers related to legal services. Few of them go on working in legislative institutions or administrative departments related to law. Therefore, a large majority of the graduate do not engage in legislative work, but many other legal service works. As a result, the talents trained by law major can only be general legal worker rather than professional legislative worker. On top of it, the course of legislation can only focus on the cultivation of general legal talents instead of legislative professionals. It has turned unnecessary to cultivate law students through legislative courses.

3. SOLUTIONS AND DIRECTIONS ON FURTHER INNOVATION REFORM ON LEGISLATION CURRICULUM

As the core course of law major, especially for postgraduate students, the course of legislation plays a crucial role in the cultivation of legal talents. Under the background of overall implementation of ruling the country according to the law and the target of construction of law-governance society, law graduates must have a comprehensive understanding and mastery of legislative knowledge if they regard legal professional knowledge as their essential work skills. Legislation course will play an increasingly significant role in the cultivation of legal talents. In the future, to intensify the cultivation of legal talents, we must pay more attention to the teaching and scientific research of this course, constantly improve the effectiveness of in-class teaching, as well as enhance the combination of teaching and practice of legislative work. There should be new changes and development in the innovation and reform of legislation course.

3.1 Solutions on Further Innovation Reform on Legislation Curriculum

In the new era of overall implementation of ruling the country according to the law and the target of construction of law-governance society, legislation is playing an increasingly pivotal role in local social governance. Improving the quality and efficiency of legislation requires more legislative talents. The curriculum reform and innovation of legislation must revolve around the cultivation of legal talents, especially the cultivation of legislative talents. If necessary, the order-oriented talents cultivation should be carried out based on the legislative needs to enable students master certain legislative professional knowledge and skills. Legislative institutions and government organs at all levels shall provide various conditions and conveniences for colleges and universities to cultivate qualified legal talents, especially legislative talents. In the setting of the course of legislation, all the law majors, undergraduate students or postgraduate, should be required to set up the curriculum of legislation. All undergraduate and postgraduate students of law major

should undertake the training and study of the knowledge of legislation. In order to intensify the professional knowledge in legislation, all postgraduate students majoring in constitutional law and administrative law should be required to have the experience of internship in legislature for at least three months before they can graduate, and postgraduate students majoring in legislation should have the experience of internship in legislature for more than six months before they can graduate. In order to improve the teaching level of faculty members in legislative courses, staff members of legislatures should be encouraged to offer lectures or academic seminars in colleges and universities, and college teachers should take temporary posts in legislatures to engage in legislative work for a certain period of time. We should pave the ground for the employment of students after graduation, offer them more opportunities in legislatures or government institutions, and thus motivating the proactivity of students to learn legislation.

3.2 Directions on Further Innovation Reform on Legislation Curriculum

The previous courses of legislation have achieved decent teaching results and gained certain experience and skills. In the near future, the curriculum reform of legislation should focus on the following aspects:

3.2.1 Improving the Proportion of the Courses in the Cultivation of Legal Talents

At present, the course of legislation is only offered for the majors of jurisprudence, constitutional law and administrative law, not for all graduate and undergraduate law students. In the near future, from the perspective of cultivating qualified legal talents, it will be a general trend to enlist legislation courses into the curriculum of all law majors. Evidence shows that quite a few law graduates would make lots of low-level professional mistakes, even after several years since they have engaged in legal position. These mistakes largely result from their insufficient mastery of basic professional knowledge, and failure to attend the legislative courses in a systematic way. In the future, we should intensify the study and training of relevant knowledge of legislation in the course design of legislative talents cultivation. Not only should legislation be regarded as the core course that law major students must learn, but also the proportion of class hours and credits should be enlarged so that law major students can have more opportunities to understand and learn from the theory and practice of legislation.

3.2.2 Continuing to Optimize the Content of In-Class Teaching and Improve the Effect of In-Class Teaching

The content of postgraduate in-class teaching is usually carried out around special subjects. It is the teacher who can decide the teaching content. Subsequently, how to optimize the teaching content and make the teaching content more suitable for cultivating legal talents is

the key problem to be considered while designing the teaching content. In most cases, course content is better to be set by the consultation and negotiation of the teaching team or professional tutor group. Whether the setting of each special subject is suitable for students, or its relevant content is necessary for students to improve their legislative knowledge should be discussed and analyzed so as to make it more targeted and effective for improving students' thinking ability in legislation.

3.2.3 Strengthening the Compilation of Teaching Materials and Protruding Its Pertinence

During the postgraduate period, there is usually no textbook as guidance for student. In addition to the lecture offered by the teachers, students have no teaching materials for learning after class, which decreases the teaching effect to some extent. Legislation is a critical course for law majors. In the undergraduate stage, *Legislation* or *Local Legislation* is used as textbook. However, in the postgraduate stage, there is no specific legislative textbooks. Consequently, students can only learn from the lectures and reviewing from the notes taken in class. In order to enhance the teaching effect and improve the quality of learning, it is necessary to compile relevant teaching materials according to the knowledge structure and learning characteristics of postgraduate students. In this way, they could have more reference and auxiliary materials in learning. Of course, attention should also be paid to the connection between general legislative knowledge and professional legislative knowledge when compiling their textbooks, so that the textbooks can be suitable for all postgraduate students of law majors, as well as for students of jurisprudence, constitutional law and administrative law.

3.2.4 Reinforcing the Curriculum Based on the Demands of Local Legislative Talents

Colleges and universities offer courses on legislation to cultivate more students for the construction of local legal governance. Therefore, it is an important goal of legislation course to meet the needs of local development on legal talents. In the near future, it would be an overall tendency to push forward the innovation and reform of in-class teaching mode, teaching content and teaching practice based on the needs of local legislative talents. With the development of local legislative cause in recent years, local legislative work has new expectations and requirements for legal talents cultivation. Local legislative work, especially the legislative work of cities divided into districts, has transferred from the first phase "not knowing how to carry out legislation" to the second phase "how to carry out legislation in a more effective and qualified way". So does the legislative talents. In the past, any law graduate could participate in the legislative work. Nowadays, talents who have undertaken specific legislative training are called for to participate in the legislative work. The new requirements of legislative

work on talents should be combined with the reform and innovation of legislative curriculum. The target of the reform and innovation of legislative curriculum should be cultivating talents who are more suitable to engage in legislative work and setting up an all-round and systematic curriculum system.

3.2.5 Deepening the Practical Support of In-Class Teaching

Legislation is an important subject based on practice. Only by closely combining practice with scientific research

can this subject be more vigorous, energetic, effective and attractive. The future trend of curriculum reform and innovation is to combine the in-class teaching and the support of the practice of legislation, which, on the one hand, offers more opportunities for teachers to participate in legislative practice or allows legislative workers to directly participate in teaching; on the other hand, provides students with more internship opportunities. If permits, we should construct a two-way exchange mechanism between universities and legislatures to make internship or working exchange a normality.