

Exploration of Issues and Countermeasures in the Ideological and Political Construction of Law Courses

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Abstract: The cultivation of legal talent in the field of law is closely intertwined with the implementation of the national strategy for the rule of law. The ideological and political construction of law courses is a reflection of the implementation of the national education policy in legal education. However, at present, there are some significant issues in the ideological and political construction of law courses in universities, such as inadequate teaching quality, outdated course content, and a lack of synchronization with the increasingly strong requirements for socialist legal talent development in the new era. This paper proposes to use the methods of literature research and case analysis, combined with the practical situation of legal education in our country, to provide targeted and actionable improvement suggestions for the prominent issues in the ideological and political construction of law courses in China, specifically by establishing and improving institutional mechanisms and systematically promoting the ideological and political construction of law courses in a scientific and holistic manner.

1. Introduction

In light of China's comprehensive push towards the rule of law, it is imperative to cultivate a vast number of high-caliber legal professionals with a keen sense of both legal and moral education. As a vital locus for fostering first-rate socialist legal talent, the legal education offered by universities bears critical importance. Accordingly, the ideological and political construction of law courses takes on heightened significance. In pursuit of this, scholars have probed the problems and pathways facing the practical implementation of ideological and political construction in law courses at the university level. This inquiry has principally focused on the quandaries and potential remedies pertaining to the present-day efforts to undertake such construction in law courses. For instance, scholars such as Liang Ping and university president Ma Huaide, in their respective articles, *Exploration of the Practical Road of Exceptional Legal Talents with Dual Emphasis on Legal and Moral Education in the New Era* and *Exploration and Practice of Ideological and Political Construction of Law courses*, have undertaken explorations and summations of the difficulties and practical strategies entailed in the ideological and political construction of law courses in China, including aspects such as curriculum construction, faculty resources, and curriculum evaluation system construction.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the prominent issues still existent in the ideological and political education of law courses in China's legal major, based on the conclusions of existing research. Adopting a literature review and case analysis method, the study will propose targeted and operational improvement suggestions for the course of legal education in China, while taking into consideration the practical realities of universities. The emphasis will be on establishing and improving relevant institutional mechanisms for teacher training, curriculum content, course assessment, and pedagogical reform in a systematic and effective manner to address practical issues. This will provide theoretical support and have a positive impact on the continued promotion of the ideological and political education in law courses in China.

2. The Necessity of Ideological and Political Construction of Law Courses

Since 2020, the state has placed great emphasis on the ideological and political work in universities, and has put forward the goal of “cultivating talents with morality and legal expertise” in the education of legal talents. The incorporation of ideological and political education into law courses is an embodiment of the educational policy for the legal profession. [1]

The realization of a government governed by the rule of law, a society based on the rule of law, and the creation of scientifically sound legislation, in addition to the enforcement of laws with exacting standards, impartial and fair administration of justice, and the conscientious obedience of all citizens, necessitates a highly competent team of legal professionals. It is imperative that we cultivate exceptional legal talents as a fundamental cornerstone of comprehensive rule of law governance. Although our country's legal education and talent development have achieved noteworthy success, certain issues remain that require redress. A salient problem is that some legal education emphasizes superficial formalities over substantive effectiveness, and the cultivation of legal talent prioritizes professional expertise over ideological and political character. Such a one-sided education is unlikely to succeed.

In comparison to other fields of study, the “political and ideological theories teaching” in legal studies has a distinctiveness of its own, primarily because of the inherent political nature of the legal profession itself. Hence, while imparting professional knowledge to students, it is incumbent upon law teachers to ensure the correct political orientation is maintained. [2] To focus solely on professional education while neglecting to cultivate the intellectual and moral virtues of students would be insufficient. Therefore, it is imperative to augment the development of political and ideological education in law courses.

3. The Realistic Dilemma of Ideological and Political Construction of Law Courses

Currently, although some universities have made substantive progress in the construction of political and ideological education within law courses, there are still issues that need to be addressed in the establishment of such mechanisms in other institutions. These issues include:

First and foremost, the lack of robust mechanisms for integrating political and ideological education into law courses is a systemic issue. [3] Generally, the teaching of ideological and political courses is entrusted to Marxist colleges, which are not closely aligned with legal education, leading to a schism between professional education and ideological and political education. Recently, several universities have made “Legal Professional Ethics” a mandatory course for legal majors. However, the courses are still taught by law teachers who may not have a profound understanding of practicalities, and the course content is primarily focused on theoretical explanations, rendering it abstract and lacking in practical relevance. As a result, the educational effectiveness of legal professional ethics is difficult to assess, and its educational value is diluted. Therefore, this will require careful consideration of the points of convergence between political and

ideological education and legal education and the effective integration of ideological and political elements into professional education.

Secondly, there is a need to enhance the capability of teachers in delivering ideological and political theories. Currently, law teachers in universities mainly teach basic legal theories, and most of them lack abundant knowledge of ideological and political theories. They are unfamiliar with how to integrate ideological and political elements into professional knowledge. A majority of them pay little attention to researching and teaching curriculum ideology and politics, as they believe it is the responsibility of ideological and political teachers. [4]Although some teachers incorporate ideological and political elements into their courses, they fail to do so organically and their efforts appear forced.

Thirdly, a disjunction between pedagogy and praxis has emerged, with theoretical learning trailing behind practical application. Recent years have witnessed China's legislative, judicial, and law enforcement fields embrace scientific and technological advancements, which in turn have fostered novel legal practices and yielded a plethora of cutting-edge outcomes. As a result, the rule of law's operational framework has undergone significant restructuring, giving rise to numerous revolutionary reforms. For instance, the rural revitalization program has introduced new land-management models, such as the "separation of the three rights", and novel business paradigms like "farmers + cooperatives", leading to alterations in established legal relations. However, existing knowledge and theories fall short of explicating these changes and have even created legislative vacuums. Despite this, university law curricula still focus on traditional basic principles, lagging in teaching resources, lacking practical integration, and insufficiently embracing ideological and political elements in course design.

Fourthly, the evaluation of students' performance in law courses is incomplete in its reflection of the curriculum's ideological and political education indicators. Presently, law courses at various universities do not entirely integrate the indicators used to assess ideological and political education into their assignment and evaluation methods. They persist in focusing on assessing students' command of knowledge and promoting their professional cognitive abilities, while insufficiently emphasizing the cultivation of values, the spirit of rule of law, national pride, and patriotism. This emphasis on professional knowledge disregards the guidance of values and the holistic development of education.

4. Suggestions on Perfecting Ideological and Political Construction of Law Courses

In light of the problems identified in the ideological and political construction of law courses, it is imperative to firmly grasp the direction of cultivating socialist rule-of-law talents and strive to cultivate a group of highly qualified legal professionals who possess both integrity and competence. In legal education, the primary objective of ideological and political theories teaching is to not only equip students with a solid foundation of legal knowledge, but also to instill in them lofty political ideals and aspirations, providing important support for the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the training of successors. Specific measures that can be adopted include:

Actively promoting the reform of ideological and political theories teaching in all courses, and scientifically positioning the relationship between ideological and political education and professional education

The integration of ideological and professional education is not a mere superficial combination, but an organic fusion that complements each other. The requirements and content of ideological and political courses should be fully reflected in professional courses. In the talent training program, teaching outline and course arrangement, the value orientation and case advantages of the legal profession should be fully reflected, and the cultivation of a sense of justice should be the primary

task. University students should be educated to accurately identify justice and injustice through intuitive judgment, combining social hot news and typical cases. In addition, in legal education, teaching activities should be actively planned and designed in a targeted and purposeful manner. The recognized moral norms, value concepts, and political ideas advocated by our country's rule of law society should be naturally integrated into the teaching process of professional knowledge. [5]

For instance, the China University of Political Science and Law has taken the lead in establishing courses on the rule of law ideology nationwide. These courses provide students with a systematic understanding of the ideology of comprehensively governing the country by law in the context of the new era of Chinese socialism. Through organizing renowned experts to lecture, this effort has played a significant role in guiding students to appreciate the value of law. Students have gained a deep understanding of the historic transformation and the unprecedented achievements of China's rule of law construction. As a result, they are able to truly form a legal mindset and belief in the rule of law.

Establishing a relevant evaluation and incentive system and strengthening the cultivation of teachers' capabilities in ideological and political theories teaching

Firstly, it is crucial to incorporate the development of ideological and political theories teaching into the teacher evaluation system. Universities can establish a comprehensive evaluation mechanism through regular and irregular student evaluations, peer evaluations, and management observation, to examine teachers' development of ideological and political theories teaching, and to provide timely feedback and guidance for improvement, thus continuously enhancing their capabilities. Moreover, the evaluation of ideological and political theories teaching development should be included in the performance evaluation of teachers. Specific requirements regarding indicators of ideological and political theories teaching should be clearly stated in the promotion evaluation and various award and commendation systems. [6] Emphasis should be placed on the demonstration effect of high-quality courses, promoting a series of exemplary courses that are characterized by profound ideology, innovative forms, and favored by students.

Secondly, it is imperative to enhance the cultivation of teachers' ideological and political theories teaching competence through teaching management systems. Teachers of law disciplines should remain steadfast in their ideals and beliefs, becoming staunch believers, active propagators, and exemplary practitioners of Marxist legal thinking and the theory of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics. They should lead by example in practicing core socialist values, strive to be models of speech and behavior, and guide and motivate students through their practical actions. [7] As the main body of education, teachers should comprehensively promote the construction of legal education curriculum through a teaching style that nurtures without making noise. They should possess both professional teaching skills and ideological and political teaching skills, using both effectively to become an outstanding educator who is adept in ideological and political theories teaching, equipped with a solid knowledge foundation, moral integrity, and compassion for students. Specific measures could include ideological and political training in pre-service training programs, integrating the improvement of professional skills with the enhancement of political literacy, and continuous post-employment training in ideological and political theories teaching skills, including collective lesson planning, group discussion, and standardized examination and assessment in course content, teaching hours, and evaluation.

4.1 Reforming Classroom Teaching Methods to Strengthen the Practicality and Timeliness of Education

The method and approach to teaching are of paramount importance, as they can significantly impact the efficacy of education in the classroom. To enhance the quality of classroom instruction

and bolster the practicality and contemporaneity of ideological and political theories teaching, teachers must continuously refine their teaching and educational techniques. This includes designing multiple case study seminars and practical courses, such as simulated courtrooms, legal clinics, case diagnosis classes, and lawyer practical courses. The implementation of practical courses can transform passive classroom listeners into active participants, allowing students to cultivate their nationalistic and patriotic values through practical experience and thereby improving their ideological and political quality.

On January 19, 2021, the Supreme People's Court issued the *Guiding Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Socialist Core Values into Judgments and Legal Reasoning*, which pointed out that all levels of courts should deepen the integration of socialist core values into judgments and legal reasoning, and use them as important guidelines for understanding legislative purposes and legal principles [8]. In law courses, judicial case training can be added to enable students to understand the positive energy conveyed by current judicial practices and guide them to internalize the habit of compliance with laws and regulations, and promote socialist core values [9].

Simultaneously, it is imperative to closely integrate with reality. Law teachers in universities may apply to become part-time lawyers and actively engage in legal practice to gain the latest practical experience to reflect in their classroom teaching.

The discipline of law is highly practical, and legal education must strike a balance between practical and theoretical instruction. To this end, it is necessary to break down the institutional barriers between academia and society, and integrate high-quality teaching resources from actual working departments into academic institutions. Furthermore, a more robust dialogue between legal scholars and practitioners must be encouraged, promoting the harmonious combination of theory and practice in legal education and research. One way to achieve this is through collaborations with practical departments, such as inviting judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and legal professionals to provide practical knowledge in the classroom. Such efforts will enable students to acquire a deeper understanding of their future professional endeavors, while instilling within them the correct worldviews, life philosophies, and value systems. Ultimately, these measures will cultivate the noble sentiments and moral character of legal students.

4.2 Incorporating Ideological and Political Theories Teaching Assessment Indicators in Course Evaluation

In the assessment of law courses, a comprehensive evaluation approach should be adopted to refine the evaluation criteria for students' performance, which not only examines their understanding and application of the learned knowledge but also reflects the teaching capacity of the teachers in terms of ideological and political theories teaching. The assessment of law courses should be tailored to the characteristics of the major, and the assessment criteria should be reasonably divided into three aspects: ideological and political literacy, basic knowledge, and comprehensive ability. [10] In the design of assignments, group tasks, and tests, the elements of ideological and political education should be incorporated. The assessment of ideological and political literacy should be carried out by teachers throughout the teaching process, while the assessment of comprehensive ability can be evaluated through open-ended questions that challenge students to showcase their proficiency in various aspects.

5. Conclusions

The unique nature of law major presents distinctive challenges and solutions for ideological and political theories teaching in law courses. In response to the existing issues with ideological and political construction in law courses in China, feasible strategies include actively promoting

curriculum reform, scientifically positioning the relationship between ideological and political education and professional education, establishing relevant evaluation and incentive systems, enhancing the cultivation of teachers' ideological and political theories teaching ability, reforming classroom teaching models, strengthening the practical and contemporary aspects of teaching, and reflecting ideological and political evaluation indicators in course assessment. However, these proposed suggestions for improvement are still far from sufficient to meet the requirements of cultivating outstanding legal talents with both morality and legal expertise in the new era. Furthermore, the ideological and political theories teaching of law courses must have strong academic support. Law teachers should improve their own research ability, fully exert the positive role of theoretical research in promoting ideological and political education in law courses, and continue to advance the ideological and political construction of law major.

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