

Research on International Law as a General Education Course

Jiu Liu^{1,*}, Le Shen², Chu Yao¹, Yi Liu¹, Yuetong Gao¹, Jingyi Wu³

¹College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Harbin Engineering University, Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China

²School of Law, Anhui University, Hefei, Anhui Province, China

³Department of Political Economy, King's College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author: nine699@hrbeu.edu.cn

Keywords: International law, general education course, new engineering majors, students cultivating

Abstract: International law plays an important role in the international system and global governance. Therefore, in order to enrich and innovate the students cultivating system, school of future technology of Harbin Engineering University has incorporated international law as a general education course into its science and engineering students cultivating program. Compared with international law as a professional course, international law as a general education course has its particularities in teaching objects, teaching objectives and contents. In teaching practice, multi-dimensional teaching objectives should be established, ideological guidance should be focused on. Therefore, it is necessary to innovate the teaching and assessment methods, so that this course can become an effective way and important practice to spread the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and be good to the development of science and technology in China.

1. Introduction

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education in China issued the "Guidelines for the Construction of Future Technical Colleges (Trial)", focusing on the demand for revolutionary and disruptive technical talents in the future, and promoting the construction of future technical colleges with strong overall strength and obvious comprehensive advantages in professional disciplines.^[1] In June 2021, after nearly two years of preparation and argumentation, Harbin Engineering University (Hereinafter: HEU) decided to establish the School of Future Technology. The School of Future Technology aims to cultivate leading scientific and technological talents who lead the development of marine technology, and serves the national strategy of building a strong maritime country. Based on the school's maritime advantages and distinctive disciplines, the basic and applied disciplines intersect and compound, adhering to a student-centered and ability oriented approach, it is an innovative measure for the school's talent cultivation reform. School of Future Technology of HEU has an excellent source of students, who have excellent scores in the college entrance examination in various provinces of China. It is also the college with the highest admission scores in the whole

HEU. School of Future Technology aims to cultivate future oriented national chief engineers as its talent cultivation goal. To achieve this cultivation goal and enrich and innovate the talent cultivation system, School of Future Technology incorporates philosophy and social sciences courses such as eastern and western philosophy, western political economy, and international law into its talent cultivation program for science and engineering.

The central government's proposal on formulating the 14th Five Year Plan clearly states that "strengthening the application of international law, maintaining the international system with the United Nations as the core and the international order based on international law, and jointly addressing global challenges". In recent years, the interest in the ocean, polar regions, outer space, and the internet, has not decreased in popularity, and the establishment of regulations and international legal games in these cutting-edge fields have intensified. Thus, in the future, talents need to have a broader perspective. In view of this, School of Future Technology of HEU has included the course of international law in its talent cultivation program with a total of 24 class hours.

In fact, offering international law courses to outstanding science and engineering students in future colleges is still in the exploratory stage, but there is already experience domestically and abroad in teaching humanities and social sciences as general education courses for reference. For example, Stanford University in the United States requires all students to complete eight interdisciplinary elective courses in undergraduate education, and offers compulsory courses in civic education, liberal education, and global education as general education courses for first-year students; International Political Science, International Law, and Political Economy courses are offered as general courses for higher grade students through lectures and discussions. Moreover, Tsinghua University offers general courses in humanities and social sciences such as science history for students majoring in science and engineering. These new courses can not only strengthen the foundation of mathematical and humanistic thinking, but also focus on interdisciplinary integration.

2. The characteristics of international law as a general education course

2.1 The teaching objects have special characteristics

The students of the School of Future Technology have a good knowledge foundation and strong learning ability and have preliminary top-notch talent qualities. The School of Future Technology adopts a college based training model, absorbing students from different majors related to the future ocean and shipbuilding industry, such as ship engineering, power and energy, intelligent science and technology, underwater sonar, etc. The students are not law students but students from different science and engineering majors, with diversities in their majors. This requires the international law course as a general course to be universal, easy to understand, and interesting.

In addition, it is precisely because students have different majors that excellent science and engineering students in the classroom have diverse perspectives that are different from law students and from each other. This requires the content and methods of international law courses as general education to have divergence and flexibility, and strive to motivate students to participate in the classroom.

2.2 Teaching objectives have particularities

In the new era, the world is undergoing extensive and profound changes, and a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation is emerging. Major countries around the world are focusing on new technologies such as next-generation communication technology and higher-level artificial intelligence. China's "14th Five Year Plan" will be based on a new stage of

development, implement new development concepts, and build a new development pattern as strategic guidance.^[2] Focusing on cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum information, integrated circuits, life and health, neuroscience, biological breeding, aerospace technology, deep earth and deep sea, we strive to achieve a leap in China's technology from "parallel" to "leading" in the new situation. ^[3] Science and technology are the core competitiveness of a country, and technological progress and industrial transformation often relate to the game of great powers. In this context, it is crucial to cultivate scientific and technological talents, and it is also necessary to cultivate professional foreign-related legal talents. It is even more important to cultivate top-notch "new engineering" talents who have a sense of rules and an international perspective.

Therefore, the teaching objectives of international law courses aimed at science and engineering students as general education are different from the training objectives of international law courses aimed at law majors as compulsory courses. Here, the so-called teaching objectives refer to a clear expression of what changes teaching will bring to students, which refers to the expected learning outcomes of students in teaching activities.^[4] Teaching objectives are the starting point of carrying out teaching activities, and teaching activities should always revolve around teaching objectives. Teaching objectives are also the end point that teaching activities aim to achieve. Teaching design and classroom activities should serve the teaching objectives in order to achieve them. The rise of a great power cannot be separated from the support of international talents. In the context of the rise of a great power, the important role of international law is increasingly prominent. The original intention of international law education is to cultivate talents for the country or government, enhance their professional abilities, and enable them to better play a role in China's foreign-related rule of law construction.^[5] For science and engineering students studying international law as a general education course, the purpose of offering this course is not to cultivate them into professional talents who promote the construction of socialist foreign-related rule of law with Chinese characteristics, but to cultivate the humanistic literacy and correct worldview of future technological innovation leaders with Chinese characteristics through the teaching of international law, cultivate international talents who firmly establish the concept of safeguarding national sovereignty and rights, guide them to become future industry leaders with international rule awareness, international perspective, and international law views of major countries, so that they can maintain national interests, serve major strategic needs of the country, and contribute to the development of national science and technology in practical learning and work.

2.3 The course content is of great differences

The teaching objects and objectives of international law as a general education course are different from those of international law as a professional course. Therefore, the teaching content of international law as a general education course also has its particularity. Since becoming a professional foreign-related legal talent is not the training goal of science and engineering students studying international law as a general course, international law teaching for these general course students should not be the first goal and priority of subject theoretical knowledge teaching, but should be inclined to help students broaden their international perspective, establish a new era of international law view, rather than solidifying their professional knowledge foundation.

As a general education course, for non-professional students, expanding the breadth of knowledge is more important than exploring the depth of knowledge in the teaching content. Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on the depth and simplicity of knowledge transmission. Through legal interpretation of international situations, events, and news that students are interested in and are interested in, students should be trained to have a correct understanding of international

relations, international law, and new issues. With a correct perspective on international law, students should view international situations and problems in a way that is acceptable to illegal students, and solve problems that arise in work and international communication.

3. The practical path of teaching international law as a general education course

3.1 Establishing multidimensional teaching objectives

3.1.1 Emphasize ideological guidance

International law, as a general education course aimed at "new engineering" talents, should be guided by ideology as its core goal. The goal of cultivating "new engineering" talents is to become leading figures in the high-tech field with world-class level, and to contribute to the development of national science and technology and industrial upgrading in the future. This is completely different from the goal of cultivating foreign-related legal talents. Therefore, the core goal of conducting international law general education should not be to build solid theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

On February 14, 2022, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the National Development and Reform Commission issued the "Several Opinions on Deepening the Construction of world-class universities and disciplines", which pointed out that it is necessary to target the national high-precision and cutting-edge areas, target strategic emerging industries, inherit and promote Chinese excellent traditional culture, and new directions in governance and governance, and have qualified construction universities "announce and lead", improve the talent training system, and optimize the demand oriented education mechanism. It can be seen that higher education should cultivate talents that can be used for socialist construction in our country. The goal of talent cultivation is not arbitrarily designed, but depends on the needs of the country. For "new engineering" talents, the core task of "future chief teacher" in opening international law as a general education course is to guide the thinking, cultivate an international perspective, and cultivate a correct international law view and family and country feelings.

Teaching international law as a general education course for non-law major students is not aimed at cultivating engineering students to become professional foreign-related legal talents in the future. Instead, it is based on the needs of the country and the times, and through this general education course, it cultivates students to establish a correct view of international law, be able to stand on the Chinese side in the process of thinking about problems, and form value consciousness. In the new era, ideological guidance is an important goal of education, and the development of education should always adhere to educating people for the Party and talents for the country. Teachers should consciously incorporate value guidance when carrying out teaching activities or presenting their academic proposals, rather than just objectively retelling and introducing them.^[6]Through value guidance, help students form value consciousness when analyzing international issues using international law, such as naturally integrating the cultivation of territorial sovereignty consciousness into the teaching of territorial and sovereignty concepts. The patriotism should be rooted in the hearts of "new engineering" talents. Only when the "future chief engineer" has a sense of faith, honor, and belonging to the country and the nation, can personal ideals and beliefs be combined with the future destiny of the country, and scientific and technological research never deviate.

3.1.2 Cultivate an international perspective

The world is undergoing unprecedented changes, and the development trend of a community

with a shared future for mankind is becoming increasingly clear. The "new engineering" talents we are currently cultivating must ultimately face the world and the future. In order for China's scientific and technological level to develop to a leading level in the world, our scientific and technological talents must have world-class levels and capabilities. Therefore, the "new engineering" talents needed in the new era must have an international perspective.

To cultivate students with an international perspective, teachers should first have an international perspective. Through vivid, in-depth, and specific vertical and horizontal comparisons, he made some truth clear. This requires teachers to not only impart knowledge within the context of global development, but also to place international law in the context of global development, broaden their horizons, and enable students to perceive the vastness and changes of the world. Only then can students have a more comprehensive understanding of China's development and choices in the midst of turbulence, and form thinking habits that place China's scientific and technological development within the framework of global development.

3.1.3 Promote comprehensive development

The development of the times and technological progress have put forward higher requirements for talents, and cultivating scientific and technological talents should be based on the overall situation to promote the comprehensive development of talents. The world environment is undergoing profound changes, and engineering education worldwide is entering a new stage from quantitative to qualitative change. It is necessary to have a clear and calm analysis and understanding of this.^[7]In order to actively respond to the arrival of a new stage, educational innovation is imperative. Therefore, it is necessary to combine talent cultivation goals, focus on cultivating innovative abilities of talents, and promote the comprehensive development of "new engineering" talents.

How does it promote the comprehensive development of students as an innovative measure to break down existing disciplinary barriers? Law is rooted in social reality, and international law is closely related to international relations and the game of great powers. Meanwhile, international law is the universal legal language of the world and the fundamental tool for solving international problems. As a general education curriculum, international law aims to cultivate students' ability to apply the knowledge they have learned and analyze international hot topics. The world situation is constantly changing, and the depth and connotation of history are profound. Students are guided to use their learned knowledge to correctly analyze and understand international issues. Combined with a series of speeches by China's diplomatic spokesperson, they can feel China's position and finally propose feasible solutions to the problems. This also meets the training requirements of the undergraduate standard of the "Excellent Engineer Education and Training Program".^[8]

Moreover, international issues often have no definitive conclusion or unique solution. In the teaching process, group discussions are used to arrange discussions, guiding students to divide their work reasonably, express themselves, concentrate their opinions, and fully discuss. Finally, opinions are integrated to form solutions, which can exercise students' coordination and cooperation abilities. It should also be noted that in China's education system, compared to humanities talents, the cultivation of science and engineering talents often lacks the exercise of expression ability. Effective output is necessary to transform good innovative ideas into concrete plans that can be implemented and promoted. In the teaching process of international law courses, engaging in sufficient discussions on a certain international event or news in the classroom can guide students to actively express their ideas and help them fully exercise their expression skills in the classroom.

3.2 Innovative teaching methods

Firstly, we need to search for "lesson plans" in current affairs. Legal norms will not exist independently from social reality. Teaching international law as a general education course to "new engineering" students should pay more attention to the connection between classroom knowledge and international hot topics to achieve the goal of depth and simplicity. For example, in the Russia Ukraine issue, there are a series of international legal contents involved, such as the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, jus cogens, war law, and inevitability. Among them, "Russia's recognition of the Donetsk People's Democratic Republic" can be used as a case of national recognition. By extensively listing international current events and connecting them with knowledge, students can enhance their humanistic literacy, cultivate their awareness of changes in the world, and cultivate their international perspective. In teaching practice, it has been proven through students' classroom performance and post class feedback that integrating current international hot topics into the teaching process is a necessary path to achieve the teaching goal of international law as a general education course.

Secondly, train thinking in case studies. The sense of acquisition in learning knowledge needs to be satisfied through application. Emphasizing the discussion of current hot topics and classic cases in the classroom can help students effectively understand, improve their acceptance, and better help them improve their sense of acquisition in learning. By using classroom knowledge to analyze current hot topics and classic cases, students can better exercise their analytical and language expression abilities, which are difficult to develop in regular science and engineering courses. Current hot topics, as cases, are often more vivid and can arouse students' interest. For example, the jurisdictional issues raised in the discussion of the "Jiang Ge case" are more likely to attract their attention, thinking, and discussion.

Thirdly, timely tracking feedback and adjusting classroom pace and teaching methods based on student feedback. Throughout the entire teaching process, teacher-student interaction and communication run through the entire process. Teaching international law as a general education course aimed at "new engineering" students is an innovative practice, so the teaching mode also needs to be explored. What is the difference between the teaching mode for law students and how to adjust it? These are all issues that need to be addressed in the first round of teaching. This makes timely tracking and feedback on teaching effectiveness necessary. After the first round of teaching exploration, distributing survey questionnaires to students can better understand their current level of knowledge acceptance and psychological expectations for international law courses. Based on student feedback, teaching methods and content can be adjusted in a timely manner to achieve better teaching results. In addition, in the post pandemic era, teaching activities cannot be separated from the application of various online software. The first round of teaching adopts the dual platforms of Chaoxing · Xuexue Tong and Tencent Meeting, achieving interactive teaching of international law as a general education course, and using DingTalk software for two-way evaluation between teachers and students. Making full use of online platforms has also expanded the communication and interaction between teachers and students, making communication more timely and effective.

Fourthly, conduct bilingual teaching in both Chinese and English. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), translated "Integrated Learning of Language and Content", as a systematic set of teaching concepts and methods, refers to the teaching method of integrating non-native language with subject content through activities such as reading, games, songs, and drama in the foreign language context when teaching subject knowledge or interdisciplinary knowledge in a foreign language (non-native language).^[9] By utilizing the CLIL teaching model and integrating teaching content and classroom activities, the traditional "language centered" state

of foreign language education in China can be transformed into a focus on "content and language dual centers".^[10] International law teaching content can be integrated into the English language, achieving dual learning of international law teaching content and English language. This improves students' abilities in English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, and makes up for their shortcomings as science and engineering students, who rarely have the opportunity to engage in English oral dialogue and discussion, as well as humanities knowledge English reading.

3.3 Optimize assessment methods

Assessment is the way to present the effectiveness of classroom teaching, and the assessment method is related to the arrangement of subsequent and next round of teaching activities.^[11] In the first round of international law teaching practice as a general education course, the proportion of classroom interactive assessment has been increased. This is because since international law is offered as a general education course for "future teachers", its purpose is no longer limited to teaching international law theory and system itself, but also to cultivate various abilities and improve students' comprehensive quality. Increasing the proportion of classroom interactive assessment can guide students to focus more on classroom teaching content, stimulate their enthusiasm for participating in the classroom, and better exercise their various abilities. Increase the proportion of open test scores. The purpose of teaching international law as a general education course is to determine whether students have established a correct international perspective through this course, and whether they can view international situations and issues with the correct international legal perspective. In the first round of teaching exploration, the final assessment was conducted in the form of a large assignment. The homework includes both non- open-book and open-book questions. The questions have a certain degree of flexibility, and students cannot directly find answers from the notes summarized in class. They must engage in independent thinking and analysis, and actively apply international legal thinking to solve problems. This guides students to pay attention to understanding and digesting knowledge in their daily learning process, and try to approach problems with the thinking and perspective of international law.

4. Conclusion

Including the course of international law in its general education curriculum is an innovative move to enrich the training of "new engineering" talents, and an effective measure to focus on the development of national science and technology and cultivate "future chief engineers". The future talents of China not only require world-class professional skills and abilities, but also a strong sense of patriotism and cultural heritage. International Law, as a general education course aimed at engineering students, is based on the goal of cultivating "future master" talents. The course is determined to serve the major strategic needs of the country, cultivate humanistic literacy, international perspective, patriotism, and correct international law and worldview of future scientific and technological innovation leading talents with Chinese characteristics. Based on the special characteristics of students in terms of knowledge background, professional foundation, training objectives, and training content, innovative teaching methods are proposed to seek "lesson plans" in current affairs, train thinking in cases, track feedback in a timely manner, adjust classroom rhythm and teaching methods based on student feedback, and conduct bilingual teaching in Chinese and English, effectively improving students' English abilities in all aspects, optimizing assessment methods, and increasing the proportion of classroom interactive assessment. Increase the proportion of open-ended test scores. This completed the first round of teaching tasks and summarized the teaching experience. In short, offering international law as a general course enriches the learning content of "New Engineering" students and helps cultivate them to become the talents needed in the

new era; Improving students' humanistic literacy helps to educate them to become talents full of patriotism. Moreover, offering a general course in international law is an effective way and important practice to spread the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, and can help China achieve higher levels of progress in science and technology.

References

- [1] https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-05/24/content_5514379.htm
- [2] http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2020-11/03/content_5556991.htm.
- [3] Peng Xushu, *The Development Logic, Realistic Dilemmas, and Policy Paths of High level Technological Independence and Self Strengthening*, *The Journal of Economic Crossroads*, Issue 7, 2022.
- [4] Mo Lei, *Educational Psychology*, Education Science Press, 2007.
- [5] Li Ming, *Deeply Understanding the Importance of Cultivating International Law Talents*, *The Rise of Great Powers and International Law Education*, 2023.
- [6] Liao Fan, *Positioning and Path of International Law Education in China in the New Era*, *The Rise of Great Powers and International Law Education*, 2023.
- [7] Wu Yan, *New Engineering: The Future of Higher Engineering Education - Strategic Reflections on the Future of Higher Education*, *The Journal of Research on Higher Engineering Education*, Vol. 6, 2018.
- [8] Wu Tao, Liu Nan, Sun Kai, *Reflections on the Key Abilities of Engineering Talents from the Perspective of "New Engineering"*, *The Journal of Research on Higher Education in Heilongjiang*, Vol. 3, 2018.
- [9] Coyle D, *Towards a connected research agenda for CLIL pedagogies*, *The international journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 2007.
- [10] Baetens Beardsmore, H, *Multilingualism, cognition and creativity*. *International CLIL. Research Journal*, 2018.
- [11] Lantsoght Eva O. L, *Doctoral defence formats*. *Studies in Higher Education*, 2023.