

The Reform of Undergraduate Teaching on the “History of Foreign Law”

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Abstract

For a long time, in the "History of Foreign Law" teaching, there are some common problems as following problems: lagging teaching content, outdated teaching methods and means. In order to solve the above problems, Xiangtan University carried out fruitful reform and innovation of the teaching content, teaching methods and teaching methods in "History of Foreign Law" teaching.

Keywords: Foreign legal history, Content of teaching, Methods of teaching, Means of teaching

We have already entered the era of knowledge economy. At present, personnel training goal of China is to foster innovative talents. Teaching content directly reflects the purpose of teaching instruction and personnel training goal which is a solid support to achieve innovative personnel training pattern and a core element to improve the quality of education. In order to meet the development needs of knowledge-based economy, we must break the traditional knowledge structure, and strive to innovate the teaching content, and internalize it into abilities and qualities with independent thinking, self-exploration, creative thinking ability of anyone who receives an education through innovative teaching methods and means, insist connotation and extension n of the unity of teaching content update strategy.

1. Innovative teaching content

1.1 Participating to compile the high-level teaching materials and constructing a unique curriculum system

Xiangtan University uses domestic materials recently published as far as possible. On this basis, combining the latest achievements of the relevant disciplines involved, adjusting and improving teaching content, mainly in the following aspects:

1.1.1 Participating to compile the National Level Textbook

As the main courses of legal education programs, Foreign Legal History has more than 50 years of history in our country already. But the teaching materials of " History of Foreign Law " has used "four paragraphs and four block" system, which often leads to extreme complex course clues, poor organization and heterogeneous content and is not conducive for student to learn and master. In recent years, National Level Textbook has aimed at changing this deficiency, which has explored a new teaching system and more clear structure. As the leader of Provincial Quality Course "Foreign Legal History," Professor Xia Xinhua is invited to participate in compiling ‘Eleventh Five-Year Plan’ National level textbook "History of Foreign Law "(Chinese People's University Press, first version in 2003, revision 2008). It is the first time to add Chapter 18 "Africa Law". It has filled the gap of educational content of History of Foreign Law. Xiangtan has made an important contribution to the construction of National Level Textbook and has far-reaching impacts.

1.1.2 Establishing the syllabus with characteristics of Xiangtan University

New system of National Level Textbook has overcome some shortcomings of the original material, but it is still need the practice to examine if the Textbook follows the teaching principle of Foreign Legal History. According to the university's specific situation, Xiangtan University has developed the syllabus with characteristics of Xiangtan University. We have made the structure of chapter into the introduction and six articles (the first article of Ancient law, the second article of Western European Medieval law, the third article of Religious law, the fourth article of Anglo-American law, the fifth article of Civil law, the fifth article of Mixed law), sum up to seventeen chapter, and strive to highlight the material characteristics and give attentions to the inherent requirements of this discipline; take into account of both the type and legal systems and pay attentions to combine the historical narrative and comparative study. In the specific the arrangements of teaching content, the syllabus has taken into full account of the actual needs of the teaching segments through five aspects as following as "principle guiding s", "academic activities", "main content", "thinking and analysis", "references" by degrees. These five respects can expand students' horizons and activate their thoughts.

1.2 Introducing the latest scientific research timely and enriching the content of classroom teaching

The subjects in the curriculum will adhere to combining the understanding of the head teacher on the basis of teaching basic knowledge and fundamental point of view systematically and absorbing a wide range of the latest academic research, for more accurate, comprehensive and systematic manner. This topic will rely on four teaching and research platform such as the local legal personnel training experiment areas of, characteristics of specialty construction points of high school of Ministry of Education, Xiangtan University Law research base of Hunan Province and key disciplines of legal history, which realizes "teaching and research interactions, teaching and learning combination ". It enriches the classroom teaching through put the latest achievements in research of Africa law and legal culture of external area into classroom and teaches students about the academic spirit and methods in the process of research.

In short, we attach great importance to introduce our research results into the classroom properly. Instead of confining to a single teaching content update strategy, we use the combination of connotation and extension of teaching content update strategy. In other words, we insist the organic combination of quality and quantity, not only update and increase the amount of teaching content, but also should pay attention to the quality of teaching content; not only introduce new knowledge into the teaching content but also keep the burden of learning of educatees properly, make efforts to create harmonious teacher-student relationship and implement "people-oriented and Harmonious education" approach.

2. Innovating teaching methods

Traditional teaching approach ignores to train educatees the innovative spirit and creative abilities, and its teaching methods are based on a simple transfer of cultural knowledge, which focuses on the delivery of teaching content, rather than change. This will inevitably lead educatees to be lack of innovation and enterprising spirit, which is not conducive to improve the quality of teaching and innovative talents. Xiangtan University has made innovation in teaching methods and means of "History of Foreign Law ".

2.1 Understand and deal with the relationship between the teaching content and teaching methods correctly

Teaching content requirements is the "what to teach," while teaching method is provided for "how to teach". There is a very close link between each other. In traditional education, teaching method only focuses on how to deliver course content to students according to predetermined rules, which is a mechanical, one-way, linear teaching activity, resulting in the separation of teaching content and methods. In "History of Foreign Law" teaching reform, we insist on combine teaching content and teaching methods together. We believe that the teaching content is not just "legal content", but should be a real experience from teachers and students to the course content. It is a constant construction through the interaction between teachers and students. In other words, teaching methods is an innovation process through teachers and students innovating teaching content and constructing meaning in specific educational context .Therefore, innovation in teaching methods is also the constant change and innovation of teaching content.

2.2 Using method of combining classroom teaching and classroom discussion

In our view, "History of Foreign Law" teaching must have a certain hours of classroom lectures. Teachers should follow the curriculum requirements strictly, merge knowledge, academic and interest together, and teach the basic knowledge to students through making content easy to understand and with lively activities from the emotional to the rational. To important parts of this course such as the ancient Greek State law, the rural communes and Germanic law, the relationship between law and religion, the French Civil Code and the German

Civil Code, the formulation the United States Constitution and the research value of Africa, we make deeper understanding through taking a class discussion. such as: (1) a keynote speech by teachers, students ask questions and challenge; (2) a keynote speech by students, students participate in the evaluation and debate; (3) round-table discussions, do free argumentation towards the meaningful topic, teachers make a concluding statement. Moreover, when we talk about a foreign legal history, we usually compare Chinese ancient and contemporary legal construction to foreign on the relevant content, such as the comparison of Chinese and Western legal culture, Sino-Japanese modern legal reforms and other issues. That not only strengthens the depth of teaching, but also increases the student's interest in learning.

2.3 The appropriate application of the case teaching method

Although the Foreign Legal History is a courses of legal theory, but still can not ignore the importance of the case. Case teaching can help to enhance student's awareness and understanding of foreign legal system and legal environment. Therefore, case teaching is also one of the methods of teaching this course. However, foreign legal history is different from other course of law disciplines. The case teaching methods in this course don't focus on the specific details in case, but analyze the general features of an era or a nation reflected by the case. For example, through the introduction of Bush v. Gore case in the 2000 U.S. presidential election, we can enable students to understand the U.S. Electoral College system, the U.S. constitutional principles of federalism and relationship between big states and small state. We make the best use of the situation, not only just teach them knowledge, but also tell them how to learn.

3. Innovating teaching methods

In the " History of Foreign Law " teaching, we attach great importance to innovation in teaching methods, use a variety of teaching methods, make full use of network and multi-media and other modern teaching techniques, try to do multi-language teaching and create practical teaching environment with emphasis.

3.1 Taking full advantage of multimedia teaching technology

Multimedia teaching is one of important teaching methods of this course which has a special significance. Since 2005, we have produced some courseware of the foreign legal history and implemented multimedia methods in teaching. At present, we continue to complement and perfect it. We will use multimedia in teaching such as illustrations and pictures, audio and video synchronization, simulation, computer presentations and other multimedia technologies to form an interactive teaching environment by setting symbols, text, images, sounds, colors and animation and other as a whole, which will greatly enhance the quality of education and teaching effectiveness. For example, when we teach the ancient Babylonian law, we will show the photograph of Hammurabi Code of 18th century to students so that they can have a perceptual awareness of this well-known law in the history of the world. We will also make full use of image data in multimedia teaching. For instance, when we teach the enactment of the Federal Constitution of United States in 1787, we will play the documentary video named "The Rise of The Great Nations" which can present the backgrounds and basic elements of this constitutional truly and vividly which has a far-reaching and significant impact to the formulation of the constitutional government.

3.2 Attaching great importance to the application of network technology

Recently, we are developing e-mail for students in each grade to facilitate students to download courseware, as well as exchange learning experiences and answer the problems students encountered. We have made the plan that we will set up "Student Fine", "Law History Forum" and other sections in website of quality course " History of Foreign Law", so that even if a student in the dormitory, through the Internet, can also get the expertise of foreign legal history and a variety of information. Because this course involves a wide range of subjects, both involved in various different times and countries and a variety of specific legal system and principles, if we show relevant maps, diagrams, photographs and trial scene of famous case in the classroom vividly, nor only give students more vivid and intuitive feelings, but also can reduce the difficulties of teachers to explain something by complex illustration.

3.3 Giving full play to advantages of foreign language and trying multi-language teaching

The principal researchers of this subject have good command of foreign language, some teachers graduated from foreign languages, and some are studying abroad or participating in the International Symposium on experience. In the "History of Foreign Law" teaching, we will give full play to advantages of foreign language and try multi-lingual teaching. Although there is no name of this course "Foreign Legal History" in foreign country and no strict requirements and related materials of bilingual teaching of this course in the domestic, in 2005, we have used bilingual teaching in the teaching of this course at the undergraduate. For example, Associate Professor

Zhang Huaiyin and Zhu Weidong use English and Chinese bilingual teaching in the lecture on "Africa Law", "American Law", "British Law"; Associate Professor Hejian uses English and French bilingual teaching in the teaching of "French Law". Moreover, in the teaching process, we provide students with the relevant foreign language original as a reference, and guide them to read. We will also promote English, French and Chinese multi-language instruction in the undergraduate teaching and graduate teaching process.

3.4 Emphasizing on practical teaching methods

In the "History of Foreign Law" teaching, the head teachers must emphasize the combination of theory and practice and pay attention to create practical teaching environment. We guide students to host "Moot Court" and "English Moot Court" with other teachers of related research. Especially in the "English Moot Court", we resort to law proceedings of Anglo-American law system with good English-speaking actors, and the trial plot is vivid which provide a good opportunity for students to improve legal English, consolidate the basis of relevant professional knowledge, and develop the ability to the court debate.

To sum up, Xiangtan University has made major reforms of common problems in "History of Foreign Law" teaching. We have innovated teaching content, teaching methods and means, which greatly improve the quality of education and make some contributions for innovative human resources training and law teaching reform.

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