

Research on the Optimization of Teaching Methods for Law General Courses in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: Under the influence of the concept of “governing the country according to law,” the general law course has been paid more and more attention by higher vocational teachers. Its teaching goal is to pass on basic and common-sense legal knowledge to students, cultivate the most basic legal awareness and legal literacy of students, improve students’ cognition of law and illegal behavior in life, shape the correct three views for students so that students can use the power of law to protect their legitimate rights and interests. To improve the teaching level of law general courses in higher vocational colleges and reflect the teaching effectiveness of this course, teachers should actively optimize the teaching methods of law general courses. This paper briefly analyzes the problems existing in the current law general course teaching optimization and the necessity of teaching reform and puts forward some teaching methods that can improve the teaching effect of the course.

Keywords: Higher vocational colleges; General law course; Teaching method; Optimization strategy

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1. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of quality education, the overall comprehensive quality and education level of social citizens have been significantly improved, more social citizens know the law and understand the law. Abiding by the law has become the consensus of society, legal knowledge has gradually become the practice criterion and basis of people’s production and life, and the concept of “governing the country according to law” has become more popular^[1]. In such a social environment, no matter whether law students or not, they all need to know the most basic legal knowledge. Therefore, as a front-line unit to cultivate talents, higher vocational colleges offer law general courses and optimize the teaching methods of these courses to become the joint work of schools and teachers. The law courses in higher vocational colleges are usually for non-law students, who often lack basic legal knowledge and have little interest in learning. The

mundane and esoteric legal theories also increase the difficulty of learning. Therefore, how to effectively implement the basic law education for this group and how to carry out the teaching activities of the basic law courses in detail have become important problems that need to be solved urgently.

2. The present situation of teaching optimization of general law courses in higher vocational colleges

Education and teaching should always adhere to a “student-centered” approach, establish problem awareness, and maintain a problem-oriented focus, particularly in the implementation of basic law courses. Specifically, as the teacher of this course, the primary task is to conduct an objective analysis of the learning situation—first understanding the students, and then focusing on the class. Therefore, students should be thoroughly interviewed and surveyed to gain a true understanding of their career needs, learning abilities, interests, preferences, and the difficulties they face in learning the fundamentals of law. This enables the teacher to design classroom cases that are truly targeted and address students’ needs.

2.1. The compatibility with professional law courses are low

Law general courses, aimed at non-law students, are an important way for higher vocational colleges to provide legal education. However, the pan-entertainment society and online environment lead college students to generally pay little attention to the systematic study of legal theories. The primary source of legal knowledge for them comes from hot news shared by the media, which often results in fragmented information. To attract attention and traffic, some media outlets deliberately create antagonism and anxiety, taking legal knowledge out of context and maliciously deconstructing it. As a result, students may develop a misguided understanding of the law after encountering such misleading information^[2]. In addition, some non-law majors approach law general courses with a “utilitarian” mindset, believing that these courses have little relevance to their own fields and that learning legal knowledge will not benefit their future careers. As a result, they often study these courses solely to “earn credits.” Therefore, when designing general law courses, vocational teachers should carefully consider these issues. They should select case studies related to students’ major to increase the relevance of the law courses, helping students understand the connection between their field of study and the law, and clarifying the significance of learning legal principles.

2.2. Legal theory fails to stimulate students’ interest

The theoretical, logical, and systematic nature of law is highly pronounced. Each legal provision has been carefully deliberated by legislators and professionals, reflecting a complex network of interests and conflicts. Abstract legal principles, obscure legal provisions, and a complicated legal system make it even more challenging for students without a legal background to grasp the material^[3]. Judging from the current teaching situation, students in higher vocational colleges often exhibit poor self-control and a lack of enthusiasm for learning general legal knowledge. Moreover, most students approach this course in a formalized manner, leading to a situation where teachers end up “performing a one-man show” in class, with students acting as “audience.” As a result, students have low acceptance of legal knowledge, and the teaching effect suffers. In response, teachers should actively reform their teaching methods by selecting legal cases that capture students’ interest. Storytelling can be used to stimulate students’ curiosity and engage them, making abstract and difficult legal concepts more relatable. By integrating real-life cases, teachers can instill

legal common sense and correct values in students' minds, effectively combining both knowledge teaching and ideological-political education.

3. The significance of higher vocational law general course education reform

3.1. To achieve the unity of theory and practice

Previous teaching experiences showed that in the process of teaching law general courses using traditional teaching mode, students' enthusiasm to participate in class is not high, there is a threshold for the understanding of legal knowledge, and the teaching effect is not ideal. To improve this situation, higher vocational teachers should try their best to break through the shackles of traditional education and combine the mundane theories in textbooks with the cases in reality. Compared to cases in textbooks, real-life cases are much more dramatic and compelling. Teachers can explain the cases to students through storytelling, focusing their attention on the classroom, and allowing them to absorb legal knowledge subtly in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere ^[4]. Such a teaching approach facilitates the deconstruction, integration, and application of legal theoretical knowledge. It also allows for the intuitive assessment of students' understanding through specific cases, enhancing teaching effectiveness. This approach achieves the organic integration of theory and practice, exerting a lasting positive influence on students' future careers and daily lives.

3.2. To achieve the unity of teaching and learning

The core teaching goal of general law courses is to spread basic legal knowledge and cultivate legal thinking. For non-law majors, the traditional legal knowledge teaching mode is inconsistent with the usual learning methods. After the teaching reform, the case-based teaching model aligns more closely with students' learning habits, enabling them to easily apply situations from the cases to their personal lives and incorporate legal thinking into their daily routines. This thinking ability is highly valuable and can gradually become a fixed habit through repeated practice and reinforcement. The analysis, discussion, and summary of real cases can not only exercise students' thinking abilities, practical operation abilities, and oral expression abilities, but also stimulate their interest in legal learning, encourage them to actively explore relevant legal knowledge, and provide an effective theoretical basis for dealing with legal-related problems in the future ^[5].

4. The optimization strategy of general law teaching in higher vocational colleges

4.1. Using the task-driven method to improve students' interest in law

The task-driven method is a teaching method with the core concept of completing tasks, aiming at cultivating students' various abilities as the driving force and with remarkable results. With the deepening of the new curriculum reform in China, task-driven teaching has been widely used in teaching practice and has achieved excellent results. The task-driven method emphasizes the multi-dimensional teaching concept, encourages students to actively participate in practical activities, and flexibly use the knowledge to solve practical problems so that students can understand and master the knowledge more deeply. The characteristics of the task-driven method are as follows: taking task as the core of teaching, students as the main body of teaching, and ability as the standard ^[6,7]. Using the task-driven method to optimize the teaching of general law courses not only respects the individual differences of students and promotes the all-round development

of students, but also cultivates the students' abilities to independently learn legal knowledge and stimulates the students' active spirit of exploring the law, which is of great significance for improving the students' comprehensive literacy.

When applying the task-driven method, teachers need to conduct an in-depth analysis of the curriculum and design challenging tasks according to the teaching syllabus, students' mastery of knowledge, and actual needs. These tasks need to be closely integrated with legal theory and have practical application value so that students can realize the combination of theory and practice of knowledge in the process of problem-solving. Teachers need to have a good grasp of how difficult or easy the tasks are when designing them, and they should be neither too simple nor too complicated, lest students lack motivation or feel confused and frustrated. After defining the content of the task, teachers should also set clear goals for students, such as legal knowledge and problem-solving skills. Under the guidance of teachers, students can complete the learning task through independent exploration and research and gain a sense of accomplishment.

Simultaneously, before students embark on learning tasks, teachers should describe the expected results in detail to help students clarify their learning direction and provide criteria for follow-up evaluation and feedback. The teacher acts as the planner and guides the whole task design and implementation, escorts the rationality and effectiveness of the task, and provides students with a meaningful learning scene and direction^[8]. This way, students can master the legal knowledge in the process of completing the learning task, and apply it to the solution of practical problems, to realize the internalization and improvement of knowledge. Teachers can also make use of the case video materials related to legal columns and legal programs, teachers can more intuitively show the serious consequences of crimes to students, encourage students to analyze and solve the case problems in combination with their own experience, and actively complete the classroom learning tasks, to achieve the final purpose of classroom teaching.

4.2. Use the case-based teaching method to reinforce students' understanding of the law

The case-based teaching method refers to a teaching method that integrates the course objectives and teaching contents into specific cases under the guidance of teachers. When choosing teaching cases, teachers of law general courses in higher vocational colleges can start from the following perspectives.

Firstly, teachers can choose novel cases. For students, new cases and cases with high popularity in recent years are often more alerting to students and more in line with students' current values, so that students can make their evaluation of cases based on their own legal knowledge and moral concepts, and trigger their thinking^[9,10].

Secondly, teachers can select cases that are of interest to students. Everyone has a natural curiosity, and students are no exception. "Parent-related" cases are particularly relevant to students as they involve personal interests, making them more engaging and likely to spark higher levels of interest.

Thirdly, teachers can choose cases that are closely related to students' lives and majors. Students are the demanders and practitioners of the cases, so students should be the core in the selection of cases. Those cases that are closely connected with students' daily lives and majors are often easier for students, and the value of teaching is also higher^[12].

Fourthly, teachers can choose cases that match students' level and are of moderate difficulty. The concept of "moderate difficulty" is relative, depending on how challenging the teaching content is to understand. For complex concepts, a series of cases can be used to explain them step by step, while for simpler concepts,

relatively more complex cases can be introduced to increase the challenge.

In general, the course should use cases that involve fewer subjects and have clear legal relationships. The instructor should first plan the content of the course as a whole and continuously think about the expected effect of the course and how the students should learn effectively. Take the constitution of crime in criminal law as an example. For students majoring in non-legal studies, this is a relatively complicated theory. Considering that this part of content has a strong system, teachers only need to require students to have some understanding of it, rather than having a deep grasp of the principle of conviction. Teachers can design a series of cases, starting from the small cases involving objective lawlessness, objective causes of illegal, subjective guilt, and subjective causes of obstruction, and gradually carry out in-depth teaching ^[13,14].

Finally, teachers can choose cases with a strong orientation of value shaping. Students in higher vocational colleges are in a critical period of personality and value formation. Legal education in higher vocational colleges is mainly undertaken by law general courses, and cases become an effective tool to popularize legal knowledge. In the process of selecting cases, teachers need to carefully screen whether the value orientation reflected in the cases will harm students' thoughts. Concurrently, teachers also need to consider how to implant the concepts of "setting up correct values" and "cultivating morality" into case teaching, so that students can make full use of the law, enhance students' awareness of abiding by the law, understand the law, and using the law so that students can better protect themselves ^[15].

5. Conclusion

In the new era, the continuous advancement of quality education makes society pay more and more attention to the law, and the concept of "governing the country according to law" has long been rooted in people's hearts. As the front line of training high-quality and skilled talents, higher vocational colleges shoulder the heavy responsibility of improving students' legal literacy in the process of promoting socialist rule of law construction. Task-driven case teaching can effectively integrate legal theory teaching and practical teaching, which can help students build a legal knowledge framework and improve their ability to analyze and solve problems. This teaching method is not only helpful for students but also for teachers to master the basic knowledge of law. Therefore, it should be fully valued and widely applied.

Disclosure statement

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