

Thoughts on Constructing Online Education Course of Constitution in China

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Abstract

As a compulsory course of law specialty in China's online higher diploma education, online education course of constitution has the features that meet the necessity of distance education in the Internet age as well as the basic requirements of constitutional course teaching to be a vital way to perfect the constitutional course teaching. The springing up of various network media technology and the lower demands for the software and hardware in learning the course provides the indispensable components for the realization of constitutional online education course. The design of teaching technique environment, teaching structure, teaching contents and the evaluation of teaching quality is the elemental path for constructing constitutional online education course.

Index terms— Constitution; online education; curriculum design.

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Keywords : Constitution; online education; curriculum design.

I.

2 DEFINITION OF ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE OF CONSTITUTION a) Concept

As a specialized course of China's online higher diploma education, online education course of constitution refers to the distance education activity in law major utilizing internet to teach constitutional curriculum. "Online higher diploma education is a new type to transmit and learn knowledge by taking advantage of modern network based on WEB technology in the Internet age, which develops two-way interactive teaching activity through internet technology, satellite communication technology, multi-media technology, video technique and other modern teaching methods and, by network technologies it processes and prepares the teaching contents to realize distance transmission and management." [1]As one of the specialties in China's online higher diploma education, the law specialty enjoys great popularity among the students and the public due to its open education character which provides more convenience and has been established in most of the 68 colleges and universities which are

4 NECESSITY AND FEASIBILITY FOR CONSTRUCTING ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE OF CONSTITUTION A) NECESSITY

available for recruiting students of online higher diploma education in China currently. [2]Constitution, as a required course in law major, is quite generally set in the online education teaching plan.

Author : Law School, Southwest University. E-mail : honeywindy@hotmail.com b) Features First of all, resource sharing. By Internet the related teaching resource of constitution could be coshared to form a cross-regional and distributed teaching resource network which broadens the function of traditional course teaching of constitution with its special two-way and even multi-way exchange, and thus improves the covering scope and time efficiency of course teaching effect and lets the course teaching of constitution break through the limit of traditional course teaching. Besides, internet also provides abundant special teaching resources for online education course of constitution, especially the quality course project which publicizes the course resources through internet. Secondly, openness for student sources. Unlike the traditional class teaching which is bound to the registered university and college students, the students sources for constitutional online education course are open. It sets much lower threshold for the students who want to fulfill their professional background in law major and improve their vocational skills. Taking the enrollment targets and terms of Southwest University on online education for an example: any on-the-job employees and waiting-for-job persons above 18 years old (including) are allowed to apply without limitation for the specialty. Application for special course starting from high school level must have a diploma of general high school, secondary technical school, secondary normal school or vocational high school recognized by the country; application for undergraduate course starting from the junior college level must have the college diploma of national education series recognized by the country. These conditions are shared by the other 67 colleges and universities. Since lower recruiting threshold enables more people to share high-class education resources via online education course, thus they could acquire more opportunities and development space.

way and multi-way interactivity and openness which enable the teacher and student, student and student to make all-around exchange by internet. The teacher could make statistics and analysis on the question types, numbers and times, etc of the students by computer to understand the doubtful points and difficult points in the students' studying process so as to instruct the students more targetedly and make the students learn the constitution courses in any time at any place upon any schedule. "Teaching method is the collective name for the various tactics that teachers and students adopt in the teaching activities aiming at achieving the established teaching goals." [4] Multimedia web-based education method even overthrows the teacher-student positioning in the traditional class teaching, which transfers the simple subject-object relationship and the contents and means for the entire teaching activity are not all dominated by the teachers any longer, making it easier for the teacher and student to form a new relationship of learning together and progressing together. The former Soviet Union educationist Babansky pointed out, "one of the most important as well as most difficult problem in the optimization procedure of teaching method is to select the different teaching ways and combine them in such a way that gains the best teaching effect in a limited time under such conditions." [5] Characterized by e-mail, BBS and other instant messaging services, constitutional online education course is the result of utilizing various teaching methods rationally and comprehensively to realize better teaching effect in a more open time and field setting.

3 II.

4 NECESSITY AND FEASIBILITY FOR CONSTRUCTING ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE OF CONSTITUTION a) Necessity

Construction of constitutional online education course does not exist merely as an indispensable component of online education and teaching plan in law major, but should also highlight the pragmatic, applicable and interactive reform orientation of constitutional course, so as to be a critical approach to perfect constitution lecturing. Constitution is the core course of law major, which plays a basic role in the whole law discipline system. "Whether one knows constitution decides one's potential to be a modern jurist, where lies the fundamental difference between China's traditional jurisprudence and China's modern jurisprudence. The cornerstone or premise of western modern law science lies in its constitutional government theory characterized by power's separation and counterbalance and its jurisprudence theory of legalism." [6] This course takes the lecturing of basic principles of constitution, state theory and citizen theory as its core contents aimed to make students be familiar with the clauses and texts of constitution and relevant regulations, and requires the students to connect constitution theory with constitutional government practice to positively obey, perform and protect constitution.

However, the abovementioned basic requirements are not well met by the traditional constitution course teaching due to the following reasons. The students are lacking in practice in constitution of China; especially, the external environment for practical application in constitution theory is rather insufficient because of unrealized "judicialization of constitution" or the missing in the application of "constitution as private law" and other reasons; and the deficiency in result-oriented, applicability and interactivity of current constitution course teaching takes the bigger part. More emphasis is put on the theoretical depth, international contrast and new academic viewpoints; instead the students' comprehension and realistic needs are thus overlooked. In addition, though the soil for constitutional government practice is deficient, that does not mean the deficiency

in individual case or related material which was well verified by the selection activity of "Top 10 Constitutional Cases" organized by the research association of constitutional law of China. So could such case study and analysis go beyond academic research or highstage master and doctor degree's study and penetrate into the constitutional teaching of lower degree for undergraduate and junior college stage? Additionally, the current teaching model still maintains the traditional tripartite "teacher-teaching material-class" type in which the teacher dominates by lecturing and the student's study subject position is neglected so as to cause the less participation of them in the class discussion. Thus the students are passive in learning, and they could not thoroughly master the constitution theory or the rules for constitutional government practice, which directly depresses and blots out their productive thinking so that they won't be able to analyze or extrapolate the cases and instances systematically. "carrying out online teaching and learning will release the students from time and space limit to receive quality jurisprudence education, and their hope for knowledge updating and life-long study would be possible." [7] Consequently it is necessary to perfect constitutional course teaching through the construction of constitutional online education course with means of internet technology on its openness, instantaneity and interactivity.

5 b) Feasibility

The rising of various network media technologies makes it possible for highlighting the pragmatic, applicable and interactive teaching of constitutional course. First of all, the e-mail technique. E-

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including teaching instruction, teaching texts etc, and the student could receive it non-real-time. E-mail realizes non-real-time different venues information exchange between teachers and students and among students themselves. The list function of e-mail also makes it possible for all the students and the teachers to join in. the student could receive all the related subject study materials periodically from the teacher or classmates simply by subscribing the special topic email list of constitutional online education course. Next, the bulletin board system (BBS) technology. The popularity of BBS realizes networking storage of the materials published by the teacher and the students, the students could arrange their time to participate in the study and discussion in different scenes, while the teachers extend the time for regular class teaching, exchanging and discussing and are able to make indepth thinking for the questions and comments of the students. BBS also makes it possible for discussion and exchange of special topics such as constitutional supervision issue and electoral system issue in the constitutional online education course. Then the teacher could analyze the students' study attitude and grasping degree on relevant knowledge according to their postreplying speed, post quantity and quality. Through posting a topic and replying a topic, the teacher and the student could make deep research in the theme discussed and finish ask & answer on curriculum knowledge. Even better the teacher may hold symposiums or academic exchange meetings to deepen the student's understanding on relevant knowledge points especially the most disputable issues or the cutting-edge academic problems. Lastly, instant messaging service (CHAT). The popularization of all kinds of CHAT tools provides a more real-time and targeted communication approach for the teacher and student in constitutional online education course, among which, chatting room, QQ group and other group instant chatting tools especially supply a convenient exchange platform for the practical, applicable and interactive teaching. In such a CHAT platform, the teacher and students could not only exchange by writing text, they could also interact realtimely with words and body gestures by means of voice and video technology so that they are free to develop further discussion and analysis outside the teaching materials and textbooks concerning the constitutional government focus problems and hot cases and events in the practical field; they are even capable of building network virtual moot court or virtual law clinic to let the students acquire more direct and concrete constitutional government practice knowledge.

Furthermore, the demands for the essential software and hardware of constitutional online education course learning are not high, which further emphasizes the openness of the course. Taking the online education in Southwest University for an example: the common software used by the students includes machine examination simulation exercise, RTX set-up software, JRE, Flash Player 8.0 ActiveX Control, RealPlay 10. The teaching technique environment could adopt VTEL video meeting system, computer internet distance teaching and live broadcasting of satellite video in overall design to play real-time or non-real-time teaching activity in the online education course. The students could go to different teaching stations in all the regions to receive the video, study and take an exam, while the teaching stations may take the uniform teaching plan, syllabus and teaching materials of the school in which the students get registered and give the universal examination as per the same marking standard. Meanwhile, the students may use the online courseware, e-mail and BBS supplied on the teaching website to complete their learning, discussing and problem-solving.

The key point in the whole teaching technique environment design is the design of network study system of the school's teaching website, by which a complete system tracking and recording could be realized on each student's personal data, learning process and stage status, and thus a study recommendation could be customized for each student. Taking the constitutional online course in Southwest University for an example, whose online study system mainly consists of two main interfaces of study system and course study. After logging in, the student could interface of study system, and the interface includes personal information area, learning plan area, course announcement area, course navigation area, course assignment notice area and course BBS area.

In the personal information area, the student could have access to check and reply the messages received from teachers or classmates, as well as looking over one's own register information such as communication address, working unit etc, modifying partly one's information and one's logging-in password in the study system or just log out. In the study plan area, current study time calendar and current month study plan are displayed. In the curriculum announcement area, the related announcements of current constitution course are demonstrated. In the curriculum navigation area, all the sub-systems connected with constitution course could be smartly guided to. In the course assignment notice area, the prompt message for all the homework of the constitution course is presented. In the BBS area of curriculum, the hot posts for constitution course exchange are shown.

Compared with the traditional class teaching courseware, teaching video recording and homework assignment, the online course teaching of constitution should put more emphasis on the application of network media technology. By inserting visualized teaching flash plug-in linking of constitutional cases and events in the teaching courseware webpage, teaching video webpage and homework system webpage, one clicks the linking and the flash plug-in will run automatically in popup window form and other forms. The plug-in flash could be divided into six parts according to specific contents, that is, cases list, self-test exercise collection, relevant reference linking, relevant laws and regulations linking, relevant database resources linking and instant messenger service linking for teacher-student exchange. By such audio-visual angle as flash plug-ins to demonstrate the knowledge would train, consolidate and test the grasping degree of the student for the knowledge acquired, and accordingly they could easily approach the authority study resources websites to get the most advanced constitution knowledge; at the same time, the theoretical lecturing and practical teaching would, by such means, connect closely with and complement each other.

b) The design of teaching structure.

Online education teaching structure of constitution course covers image, sound, text, animation demonstration and lecture note etc, which make the student feel like taking lessons in a virtually truthful college classroom. For example, in Southwest University, teaching structure of constitution's online course includes online courseware, video explanation and homework assignment.

Online courseware is the basic phase in implementing online teaching, which is composed of syllabus, lecture notes and simulation tests. And the syllabus is further divided into four parts, i.e. nature and task of the course, basic requirements for course teaching, course teaching structure, teaching material and major references of the course. The 12 chapters in 3 units of the lecture notes are separately Unit 1 for Constitution Principle (Chapter 1 The introduction, Chapter 2 The basic theories of constitution and Chapter 3 the history of constitution); Unit 2 for Citizen Theory (Chapter 4 The basic rights and responsibilities of a citizen and Chapter 5 the autonomous mass organizations at grass-root level; Unit 3 for State Theory (Chapter 6 State nature, Chapter 7 Form of government, Chapter 8 State structure, Chapter 9 Economic system, Chapter 10 Cultural system, Chapter 11 State institutions and Chapter 12 State symbol). The simulation tests are mostly the judicial examination papers on constitution over the years and their answers and explanation for the answers. As the core content of performing online teaching, video instruction could be cut into 12 tutoring sessions based on teaching notes. Composed of 10 single choice questions, 10 multichoice questions and 8 expounding questions, the homework assignment is the main method to ensure online teaching quality, and is assigned in six times through the homework system completed in three months. And teachers could synchronously and timely check and make feedback to the works submitted by the students.

As to the specific teaching structure design of each chapter, the plate of basics explanation and the plate of cases and events analysis could be divided generally, in which the former contains 5 parts of introduction, learning contents, questions for thinking, relevant resources linking and discussion & exchange, and the latter includes 8 parts of introduction, cases presentation, constitution questions, teacher commenting, related knowledge linking, questions for thinking, relevant resources linking and discussion & exchange. The introduction part further contains study requirements, study key points and study difficult points. The design for studying contents could be arranged based on the traditional teaching notes by inserting minor cases and events, relevant law clauses, words from celebrity, representative pictures and videos, forms and knowledge structure chart to make the contents interesting and three-dimensional. And the discussion & exchange could be designed into five parts, that is, title, reading materials, topic, objective & requirement and discussing process.

c) The design of teaching content.

Online education and teaching contents design of constitution curriculum shall pay attention to the extension and popularity of the theoretic knowledge.

the speculative theoretic disputes of different factions. Great emphases shall be put on lecturing basics of dominant ideology and based on this the theoretical edge-cutting knowledge in academic research could be introduced properly striving to "simplify the complicated constitutional government theory rather than obscure it". In the selection of key teaching points, more attention shall be attached to constitution implementation in constitution principle session. The key to realizing constitutional government in China doesn't lie in the creation of constitution itself, but the application and implementation of it. As one of law enforcements, constitutional enforcement is the actual operation and implementation of constitutional codes and principles in real society, which reflects the true working state after constitution was formulated and is the most fundamental form for constitution to adjust specific social relationship with its direct value goal pointing to orderly law relation state, i.e. constitution order expected by constitutional government subject. Practically carrying out constitution is

the premise and base to realize constitutional government and rule of law in China, so the students shall not linger their understanding on the literal texts, that is, the obligatory written constitution, but care more about the existing realistic constitution and the ideological constitution in between, forming the value of constitution order in the analyzing process of constitution.

As far as the balance of teaching structure of state theory and citizen theory is concerned, both shall be emphasized. Citizen theory shall be arranged as Unit 2 following Unit 1 "Constitution principles" and followed by Unit 3 "State theory", in which the basic rights of a citizen shall be placed extra emphasis and also stress that such citizenship shall progress with time and accord with the world. Besides, the citizen rights idea shall be taught throughout the whole curriculum. For example, in teaching the function and power of state organs and mutual relationship, the idea that all modern state power should be restricted shall be associated with. Because power as the production of rights, its justification also comes from rights. As the power grantee, the state institution is only the performer of state power; therefore the citizen rights shall not be interfered illegally by any state organs, organizations or individuals, nor will the rights be deprived illegally. All the state power must exist and work under the premise of being helpful to guarantee the citizen rights. Stressing citizen theory in constitution teaching is useful for developing the students' law ruling sense to actually ensure citizen rights and prevent the abuse of state power. "Through studying constitution, the students shall realize that protection of individual interests and realization of individual freedom is guaranteed by setting up legal rights." [8] As to joining theoretical teaching with judicial examination, the answers will be as follows. Although constitution does not take up mega percentage in judicial exam, yet it's still very critical. In the process of theoretical teaching, the constitution section in judicial examination syllabus over the years shall be read carefully, especially in combination with the clauses covered in the judicial examination papers, based on constitution code and legislative law and aided by electoral law, organization law of villagers committee and other relevant provisions and clauses modified currently to emphasize the memorization and understanding of key articles and at the same time highlight the introduction of judicial examination papers and the answering process and thoughts analysis in the case study teaching. In the assessment design for the course, students could be guided to analyze the repeated points and its frequency on constitution in the examination papers so as to take them into consideration for important selection design of teaching point.

d) The design of teaching quality evaluation.

Monitoring the student's constitution learning process strictly and effectively is the key link in improving the teaching quality of constitution online education and completing teaching quality evaluation, which is charged by the special institution of the school's online education and the distributed teaching stations to promote the students to independently fulfill all the study task regulated in the teaching plan and elevate their study capability and knowledge attainments.

Firstly, it's necessary to perfect the monitoring and organizational system of the student's study process which includes the specialized online education teaching affairs management department in the colleges and universities developing online higher diploma education and the students' affairs management department in the teaching stations of different places. Consequently the concrete work is done by the professional teachers in charge of teaching administration of the colleges and the instructors of the teaching stations. The teachers are required to have certain network media technology knowledge besides the basic occupational skills to instruct the students' study in using related network teaching resources. So the departments and teachers are responsible for making all-around supervision throughout the process on whether the constitution curriculum study is made in accordance with the teaching plan, whether all the teaching activities have been done under the requirement of course syllabus, and the independent appraisal on the constitution curriculum learning effects and the lecturing results of the teachers. The second is to quantitatively manage the students' study process. This activity could be done with the students' log-in times, log-in duration and the mouse-clicking status and other elements in self-directed study. Their study effectiveness could be judged through analyzing the student's study record by the relevant study data statistics. The more detailed the data is, the more effective management could be done by the teachers. By surveying the different judging factors in the students' autonomic study, the teachers could timely relate to their study process, single out the problems and take corresponding solutions. However, such check and supervision shall be taken in a regular manner rather than as a formality. Cutting in through both the students and the teachers, both the students' completion status of constitution curriculum study plan and the teacher's instruction and review status shall be checked, and detailed situation feedback report shall be submitted to them.

The last is to intensify the monitoring function of examination. Through the unified exam in every teaching station, comprehensive analysis and test on the students' constitution knowledge acquired shall be made systematically. During the exam, we should adhere strictly to the examination disciplines to guarantee student's real testing scores and let them realize the problems existing in their independent study and then adjust their study methods or skills to finally improve study efficiency and quality. The testing papers shall also embody the training objective of constitution online education course by taking the degree of constitution knowledge the students acquire and the ability to utilize the curriculum knowledge as the essential starting point, while the test



Figure 1: -© 2012

Figure 2:

2 8

Figure 3:

III. DESIGN IDEA FOR ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE OF CONSTITUTION

[Note: a) The design of teaching technological environment.]

Figure 4:

285 question design shall enhance cultivating the students' study ability, overall ability to apply knowledge and their
286 innovative ability. ^{1 2 3 4}

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