

The Reconstruction of Higher Law Education Curriculum System in the Context of New Liberal Arts*

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Abstract—At present, the construction of new liberal arts is being actively carried out in the field of higher education in China. As an important part of liberal arts education, the major of law should take the initiative to adapt itself to the new demand for liberal arts talents in the new era, and actively explore the reform in educational concepts, educational models and teaching methods. The authors believe that the key to the construction of new liberal arts in law education lies in the reconstruction of the undergraduate course system that has been in place for decades. Only by establishing a curriculum system suitable for the training goal of talents in the new liberal arts can the new ideas advocated by the new liberal arts be put into practice and the time-honored major of higher law gain new vitality.

Keywords: *new liberal arts, training objectives, law education, curriculum system*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Education is an important cornerstone of national rejuvenation and social progress. It is an ethical and political project that benefits both the present and the future. It is of decisive significance to improve the comprehensive quality of the people, promote the all-round development of the people, enhance the innovative and creative vitality of the Chinese nation and realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." [1] As an integral and comprehensive discipline in the education system, humanities and social sciences play an important role in moral education, improving the quality of the people, training the builders and successors of socialist construction, and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Over the past 40-odd years of reform and opening up, China has achieved rapid economic development and major technological breakthroughs in many important fields of science and technology. China's overall national strength has grown with each passing day. The development of science and technology has become a social "hot spot", and various

emerging science and engineering majors have become the "favorites" of universities. Although the humanities and social sciences still occupy a place in the setting of university disciplines, their social status and professional influence are quietly declining, and they are faced with the challenge that fail to meet requirements of new era. Faced with such a severe situation, humanities and social sciences should adapt to the development background of the new era, meet the needs of modern society, carry out internal reform, make clear the orientation of disciplines, and clarify the development of new liberal arts, set up the goal of cultivating liberal arts talents in the new era, and to construct a new mode of liberal arts development in which the arts and sciences are integrated and co-existing.

II. PROPOSALS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW LIBERAL ARTS

The concept of "new liberal arts" was first proposed by Hiram College in the United States in 2017, and the main idea of the new liberal arts they explained is professional restructuring, breaking the boundaries of professional courses in university education, and conducting comprehensive and interdisciplinary learning. In 2018, the ministry of education of China decided to implement the "six excellence" plan 2.0, and the education sector also began to discuss the construction of new liberal arts. The authors think that the important reason for putting forward the construction of new liberal arts is that Chinese society has entered a new era. The new scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation will have a profound impact on people's way of production, way of life, way of work and even their values. The traditional liberal arts education is slow to adapt to the new social demand for liberal arts talents, which leads to the disconnection between talent cultivation and social demand. The traditional liberal arts education pays attention to the division of majors, which gradually forms the professional barrier, resulting in the single structure of cultivated talents; the liberal arts students focus on knowledge system rather than ability training; they are good at qualitative analysis and weak at quantitative analysis, which may lead to the disconnection between cognition and

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social reality. What's more, liberal arts education focuses on the past and the interpretation of the classics, but does not pay enough attention to and respond to the rapid changes of today's society. The above reasons lead to the decline of the existence and influence of humanities and social sciences in the era of new scientific and technological revolution. It is urgent to reform the traditional liberal arts from the aspects of cultivation philosophy, cultivation mode and curriculum system, so as to give full play to the role of humanities and social sciences in the great era of reform.

III. THE INNOVATION OF THE NEW LIBERAL ARTS

What is the innovation of the new liberal arts? Different people have different opinions on this question. The authors believe that the innovation of the new liberal arts is highlighted in the comparison with the traditional liberal arts.

A. *The disadvantages of traditional liberal arts*

In the face of a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial supply-side reform, as well as the extensive application of emerging technologies such as "artificial intelligence", "block chain", "genetic engineering" and "virtual technology", "single education", "education for knowledge", "isolated education" and "utilitarian discipline construction" in traditional liberal arts leads to the assimilation of liberal arts majors, formalization of teacher construction, engineering and utilitarianism of education construction, resulting in the unbalanced development of higher education and the "sub-health" of university talents, which seriously threatens the construction and development of national education power.

1) *"Single education" model*: Traditional liberal arts are often confined to the word "liberal arts" in discipline construction and specialty setting, adopts the simple and elite education mode, which pays one-sided attention to the extensive research and in-depth excavation of the professional knowledge system by teachers and students, while ignores the popularization and combination of knowledge in other disciplines (such as informatics, engineering, biology, etc.), resulting in the formation of knowledge and professional barriers between liberal arts and other disciplines that are difficult to make up. After achieving a certain theoretical breakthrough, such talents often lack the potential for development due to a single knowledge system, more depth of knowledge but less breadth, etc. Due to the lack of sufficient understanding and application of modern information technology (such as big data, cloud computing, cloud storage, etc.), the research content remains in the traditional field, and the research methods adopted remain in the "small data" methods such as traditional sampling and individual interview. As a result, the research subjects of liberal arts are outdated, expensive and inefficient, and the development of liberal arts is increasingly sluggish.

2) *The concept of education for knowledge*: Traditional liberal arts education in China emphasizes "knowledge" as the center, and takes the depth and breadth of knowledge as the basis for judging individual academic achievements. Those who excel in academic performance often appear as repositories of knowledge. However, such knowledge education is based on agricultural economy. In the era of inconvenient transportation and blocked information, the amount of knowledge becomes an important index to measure the level of personal knowledge. However, after entering the modern society, especially the information society, a large number of new and high stock of scientific and technological products gradually replace encyclopedic knowledge, and innovative, applied and compound talents have become the demand of the times. Therefore, the concept of cultivating knowledge talents in traditional liberal arts needs to be updated urgently. At the same time, the traditional mode of liberal arts education in China is "the teacher is the one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." The teacher becomes the leader and exporter of the teaching process, while the student is the passive receiver. Under the mode of emphasizing "teaching" and neglecting "learning", the output and reception of knowledge become one-way transfer. Students in such teaching mode are not enough to respond to major theoretical and practical problems, their vision, innovation consciousness and practical ability are limited, and they gradually become learning machines. After graduation, they cannot effectively adapt to the rapid development and rapidly changing modern society, and the advantages of liberal arts specialty are difficult to highlight.

3) *Isolated education and teaching model*: Compared with the explicit academic achievements of science and engineering and the characteristics that can directly bring social benefits and increase social welfare, the social utility of liberal arts is more covert, which is difficult to produce economic benefits and industrial transformation. As the non-materialized utility of liberal arts cannot be quantified and can not be fully revealed through data, it is often ignored in the construction of college majors, and there are few or almost no practice platforms, teaching and research offices and experimental bases for liberal arts in colleges and universities. Teachers of liberal arts can only complete their teaching tasks with the help of large classes, and students can only complete their academic tasks through classroom absorption and extracurricular literature reading. The whole subject teaching process is "closed" in colleges and universities, and part of theoretical teaching is completely separated from practical testing.

4) *Utilitarian discipline construction*: Against the background of fierce competition in the education market, universities are pursuing various national education projects and special education plans. Yang Kerui and Cao Hui believe that "these seemingly highly rational projects

actually lead higher education towards utilitarianism intentionally or unintentionally." [2] In order to build the school brand, all kinds of national talents become the object of competition among universities. In order to improve the scale of college enrollment, various popular majors and scarce majors are listed in the major Settings of universities. In order to ensure the competitiveness of colleges and universities, academic celebrities have become the focus of colleges and universities, while young scholars with relatively low qualifications are generally faced with heavy teaching tasks and low overall treatment. Higher education is no longer a pure talent training institution, utilitarianism and egoism corrode the construction of higher education, and national talent training is in danger.

The new liberal arts are the transformation, upgrading and optimization of the traditional liberal arts. Centering on the era background of reform and opening up and socialist modernization, the new liberal arts are committed to "cultivating people required by social development, knowledge accumulation, cultural inheritance, national survival and system operation".

B. The embodiment of the "innovation" of the new liberal arts

Against the background of the global new scientific and technological revolution, the new economic development and the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the new liberal arts will reform and optimize the construction system of the traditional liberal arts, providing students with an interdisciplinary, pioneering, practical and basic education and teaching platform.

1) The innovation of new liberal arts lies in "undergraduate foremost" and returning to the essence of education: Liu Zhentian holds that the concept of "undergraduate foremost" contains three levels of meaning: First, "adhering to the most basic position of undergraduate education"; second, since scientific research, public services and industrial incubation can bring direct economic benefits to universities, enterprises and society, the tendency of attaching more importance to scientific research than to teaching, attaching more importance to graduate education than to undergraduate education, and the teaching ethos of "academic qualification first", "awards first" and "professional title first" have seriously affected the realization of educational talent training objectives. Higher education should insist the saying that "talent cultivation is the core and undergraduate education is the center"; third, adhere to "the basic characteristics of undergraduate education, that is, the general, basic, academic and humanistic nature of undergraduate education." [3]

Chen Baosheng, the minister of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, stated: "Undergraduate education must achieve 'undergraduate foremost, and four returns'. The first is to return to common sense. Education should be organized on the purpose to

encourage hard working among students, and guide students to seek truth and practice. The second is to return to duty. Teachers should be guided to love teaching, be devoted to teaching, study teaching, improve the level of education and teaching, and pay attention to the construction of teachers' ethics. The third is to return to the original intention. It's needed to keep to the right political orientation, strengthen ideological and political thinking in both courses and professions, and cultivate socialist builders and successors. The fourth is to return to dreams. It is necessary to promote innovation in the philosophy, organization, management and system of running schools, and make every effort to realize the dream of serving the country and strengthening education. [4]

2) The innovation of the new liberal arts lies in the integration of educational concepts and the establishment of a comprehensive talent training system: Integrated education requires breaking down the knowledge and professional barriers of traditional liberal arts, and promoting the intersection, integration, penetration or expansion of humanities and social sciences and other emerging disciplines such as science and engineering in the construction of new liberal arts. It breaks through the traditional thinking mode of liberal arts, turns from discipline orientation to demand orientation, and promotes the formation of certain tension between disciplines and majors by dividing majors into blocks and integrating them.

For example, integrate management, ecology, systems and other disciplines, focus on environment, ecology, climate and other major issues, and solve the problem of national survival; and integrate linguistics, sociology, engineering and other disciplines, explore cross-border project construction, study "the Belt and Road Initiative", "Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development" and other major national strategic arrangements.

The purpose of integrated education is to cultivate compound talents and to meet the needs and trends of social development on the basis of professional basic theory education, adopts the teaching forms of minor courses and cross-disciplinary electives to guide students to establish an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and even cross-border knowledge system. In addition, technology integration is realized in terms of individual ability, and students' software operation, academic research and language communication skills are strengthened to realize the "trinity" of value shaping, capacity building and teaching and learning, thus cultivating a group of high-level compound talents with multi-disciplinary thinking, global vision, and super communication ability.

3) The innovation of the new liberal arts lies in the concept of innovative education and the cultivation of innovative talents: "In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, technologies such as "artificial intelligence", "mobile Internet", "block chain" and "big data" will promote the transformation of social structure, and the technological means, educational goals and student characteristics of

education will all change." [5] The construction of new liberal arts should focus on both content innovation and form innovation. In terms of teaching content, it is necessary to integrate ancient and modern Chinese and foreign countries, learn from others, and bring forth new knowledge on the basis of broadening the dimension and breadth of knowledge; In the form of teaching, the transformation from "emphasizing teaching over learning" and "text teaching" to problem-oriented intelligent teaching should be realized to realize the theoretical innovation, mechanism innovation and mode innovation in the field of humanities and social sciences, and to realize the transformation and upgrading of traditional liberal arts with the help of new discipline growth points. For example, it is necessary to promote the innovative construction of "artificial intelligence law", "construction of production, education and research of liberal arts" and "block chain of social governance".

4) *The innovation of the new liberal arts lies in the concept of practical education and the cultivation of practical talents:* Marxism holds that practice is the source of knowledge, the fundamental driving force for the generation and development of knowledge, and the only criterion to test whether knowledge is correct or not. Liberal arts is not easy to produce economic benefits and industrial transformation, can not be directly linked to the national economic development. In addition, the disembodied utility of liberal arts cannot be quantified, nor can it be fully demonstrated by data. Therefore, the social investment enthusiasm of liberal arts is much lower than that of science and engineering. Under the "text" education environment, most liberal arts students lack the ability to combine hands-on operation and learning with application, and also encounter various obstacles after entering the job. The new liberal arts education attaches importance to the combination of theory and practice, encourages students to comprehend and improve rational understanding in the process of practice, and integrates theories in practical operation. In this way, they can serve the purpose of comprehensively deepening the reform of Chinese socialism, thinking and solving the major theoretical and practical problems related to people's ideas and value choices, and improving the adaptability and application of the new liberal arts. Practical education needs to integrate government policies, university teachers, social funds and other resources with the help of universities, the government and various social subjects to form a cooperation mechanism in which the government, universities play a leading role and enterprises and various social subjects participate widely.

IV. THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW LIBERAL ARTS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF UNDERGRADUATE COURSE SYSTEM OF HIGHER LAW

The authors think that in order to practice the new cultivation idea of the new liberal arts and realize the new goal of talent cultivation, it is necessary to reform from the

aspects of education mode, education idea, teaching content, teaching method, etc., but the most critical thing is the construction of curriculum system. No matter how advanced the idea, the teaching method, they must be realized in the curriculum. No matter how new the concept is and how diversified the teaching methods are, if the curriculum system remains unchanged, the knowledge structure of students cannot be fundamentally changed, and the so-called reform is reduced to a new bottle of wine instead of a new liberal arts.

There are many majors involved in the humanities and social sciences, and the authors only discuss them in combination with the curriculum system of higher law education.

Since the resumption of the college entrance examination in 1978, the construction of higher law major has made great progress with the progressive development of socialist rule of law. According to statistics, by 2018 there were about 2,900 colleges and universities in China, of which nearly 700 offered undergraduate courses in law, training hundreds of thousands of law professionals every year. However, the curriculum of law major offered by various universities is basically the same, which is based on the core courses stipulated by the ministry of education, and some special regulation courses are added as optional courses based on the situation of the university. Undergraduate education programs are similar, and law graduates from different universities have some differences in ability, but they are very homogeneous in knowledge structure. What's more, the law major basically enrolls the liberal arts student. Therefore, the disadvantages of traditional liberal arts education are very obvious in the field of law education. In recent years, the difficulty of finding a job for law graduates once ranked first among all majors in China. In addition to the saturation factor of demand, the authors believe that it is also greatly related to the mismatch between the talents cultivated by law majors and the social demand. Against the background of new liberal arts construction, law major bears the brunt and needs to be reformed urgently.

A. *The core curriculum is "10 plus X" in law prescribed by the ministry of education*

In the world, the higher law major has a history of nearly a thousand years, and still stands in the forest of humanities and social sciences after changes. It can be seen that the law major itself has a strong vitality, and in the construction of new liberal arts, it should not shrink or even go extinct. In order to become an undergraduate major and award the bachelor of law degree, a law undergraduate must meet the national quality standards for the cultivation of law undergraduate talents stipulated by the ministry of education, which stipulates that the core courses of law undergraduate are "10+X". The "10" here represents ten compulsory courses, which are Jurisprudence, Constitutional Jurisprudence, Civil Law, Penal Law, Civil Procedure Law, Administrative Law and Administrative Procedure Law, Chinese legal history, International Law, and legal professional ethics. The "5" here refers to no less than five

courses in economic law, intellectual property law, commercial law, private international law, international economic law, environmental and resource law, labor and social security law, evidence law, and fiscal and tax law. "10+X" is the cornerstone of the law major, and it is a position that all law majors in colleges and universities must stick to, otherwise they cannot enter the mainstream or even fail to meet the national quality standards for talent cultivation.

B. Humanistic quality and ethics education are emphasized in the curriculum system

Law belongs to social science. Outstanding legal workers should be excellent social activists, and law is the last line of defense of social justice. Therefore, under the background of the construction of new liberal arts, law undergraduates should not weaken the cultivation of humanistic quality and ethics education. At present, the construction of new engineering, new medical science and new agricultural science all advocate the enhancement of humanistic quality and cultivation of humanistic spirit of science and engineering students to make up for the shortage of over-specialization in the past. As a social science major, law major should hold high the banner of humanistic quality education and inherit and develop the excellent culture of human society. Therefore, there should be specialized courses of humanistic quality in the undergraduate course system of law major, such as Chinese and western history, Chinese and western culture, general theory of ancient and modern literature, and classics of human civilization.

C. The realization of cross integration of "liberal" in the curriculum system

Now when it comes to the new liberal arts, many people immediately think of the intersection of arts and sciences. In The authors' opinion, this is a one-sided and utilitarian approach. Simply offering a few courses of science and engineering cannot achieve cross-integration. On the contrary, it may make students jack-of-all-trades. No matter how innovative the new liberal arts are, they are always liberal arts. They should first realize the interdisciplinary integration of disciplines in the field of humanities and social sciences, instead of pursuing the interdisciplinary integration of arts and sciences for quick success and immediate benefit. Therefore, the authors think that the liberal arts should be divided into several categories in the curriculum system. First of all, it is to realize the cultivation of all undergraduate majors in law. At least during freshman and sophomore years, law undergraduates should not be divided into law, economic law, criminal justice, intellectual property and other majors. Then try to realize the intersection and integration of law and management, law and economics and finance. In some developed countries, many of those working in management are law graduates. The authors suggest that compulsory courses of principles such as management, economics, sociology and political science should be offered in the undergraduate course of law, so as to realize the goal of talent cultivation with broad caliber and solid foundation.

D. "Mathematical thinking training" module is added to the curriculum system

It can be seen from the study of the major of law in China's political science and law schools that the majority of the students are majoring in liberal arts. Few undergraduate law programs make math a required subject. There are no mathematics courses in the law school the authors studied in university. On the one hand, it is not conducive to the cultivation of mathematical logic thinking, and on the other hand, it will bring huge obstacles to the practice and scientific research of economics, finance and management. As a result, law graduates lack scientific literacy and quantitative analysis ability, resulting in a single career direction for law graduates. Therefore, the authors suggest that courses of liberal arts mathematics, principles and applications of artificial intelligence, data mining and analysis, big data and law should be offered in the undergraduate course system of law.

E. The liberal arts experiment course is set up in the curriculum system

For a long time, doing experiments has been regarded as the "patent" of science and engineering students while liberal arts students living with only a mouth and a pen. Such habitual thinking and solidified understanding leads to the traditional law education to attach importance to the cultivation of students' language expression ability and neglect the cultivation of practical ability. Law graduates are good at paper talking. The idea of liberal arts living by mouth and science by hand is deeply rooted. In fact, the law profession is far from a mere lip service. Whether engaged in law enforcement, justice, or legal services, they may face complicated social reality. Even when lawmakers make laws, they should do so on the basis of extensive research and insight into what kind of laws society needs, rather than act blindly. Therefore, The authors suggest to carry out liberal arts experiments in undergraduate law education, such as comprehensive experimental practice of law, virtual simulation projects, etc., so that students can try practical operations in school and exercise their ability to analyze and solve problems with what they have learned to avoid the following situations: students feel at a loss or even ignorant after they take part in social work in the face of complicated social phenomena. They complain that what they have learned in college is useless and they have to start all over again.

F. Innovation and entrepreneurship courses are offered in the curriculum system

When it comes to innovation, many people first think of technological innovation, patent application, etc., which seems to be the "exclusive domain" of science and engineering majors. In fact, liberal arts students also need innovation. The central government has also called for and encouraged innovation across the country to build an innovative society. The innovation of business methods, sales methods, service concepts and methods, and the innovation of financial varieties should also be innovation.

Liberal arts students can also achieve innovation in the field of work. The impact and value created by the innovation of a new business method is even greater than that of a patented technology, as the success and influence of Alibaba and Wall Street on the world have amply demonstrated. Liberal arts students should not only stick to the past and read classics, but also pay attention to the changing society, look to the future and even lead the future. The innovation and entrepreneurship projects should be set up in the undergraduate education courses of law, the innovation and entrepreneurship courses should be set up, and the scientific research and innovation training should be conducted in the undergraduate courses to establish the innovation concept, master the innovation methods and cultivate the innovation ability.

V. CONCLUSION

The construction of new liberal arts is both a challenge and an opportunity for higher law education. In the new era, law education should not be stuck in a rut, but should actively explore and reform, dare to reconstruct the curriculum system, and integrate new training ideas, training models and teaching methods into the new curriculum system, so as to meet the challenges of the new liberal arts construction with an open attitude and rejuvenate the time-honored law education.

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