

## **Training Law Students to Meet Transnational Challenges**

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I started to teach law in the Law School of Zhongshan University of the People's Republic of China from 1981 when China began to implement her policy to be open to the outside world after the end of the disastrous Cultural Revolution. The Zhongshan University is located in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province which is the first Province in China that opened to the world. A large number of multinational companies came to the Province to do business. Facing the dramatic changes, we felt that we were required to adopt new methods to train our law students to meet the changes.

### **Legal English Courses**

China is a civil law country. Prior to 1980's, students hardly had chances to know how laws were implemented in other parts of the world. So we felt it was crucial to let them know a different legal system which is common in a large number of the western countries, i.e. the common law. In order for the students and lawyers to understand concepts of the common law, as well as improving their English, we started to offer "Legal English" courses to third and fourth year undergraduate students, which were the first such courses given in law schools in China.

We prepared the course materials against the legal and English background of our students. The materials were selected from the textbooks (Cases and Materials) used in the US and UK, legal encyclopedias and other legal documents. The materials covered areas including jurisprudence, legal history, constitutional law, contract law, torts, criminal law and international law.

The students showed a great interest to the variety of the course materials which had provided access to them to get exposure to the common law concepts and principles. We often heard their positive comments above the courses: "These courses have not only improved our English but also provided us with a window to see a different legal system."

It has been more than 20 years since we started "Legal English" courses and the "Legal English" text book is now in its third edition. The courses are still within the most favorite categories in the students.

For the graduate law students, we gave advance courses which included “Selective Reading of International Law Textbook”, “International Law Cases” and “International Legal Documents”. All the course materials were selected from original international law textbooks.

There was a significant increase of foreign investment by the end of 1980’s, which also led to the increase of foreign related disputes. In order to prepare the students to understand legal documents in relation to such contentious matters for example arbitration and court pleadings, summons and arbitration awards/judgements, we started to teach our students how to understand and translate these documents from English and Chinese and then from Chinese to English. We are now in the processing of compiling the above works and we hope that the compiled materials will further improve the level of “Legal English” courses.

### **Exchange Programs**

Also from 1980’s we started exchange of courses with foreign law schools. One of the early exchange programs was with Southwestern University Law School in the US (hereinafter “Southwestern”). It was not very common then for a law school in China to have exchange courses with foreign law schools. Through the introduction of an American lawyer who was then working in Guangzhou, we started contacts with Southwestern. In summer 1983, this Law School organized its first group by professors and students to visit our law school. Professors from both law schools gave joint lectures to both Chinese and American law students. The interesting topics and the discussions between the two legal systems were highly received by all the students. The two law schools had the joint courses again in 1985. From these joint courses, the two law schools established a good relationship and several professors from Southwestern, including Dean Taylor, Professor Robert Lutz and Professor Anita Glasco, gave a number of lectures in our law school introducing American law.

Following the visit by Southwestern, a great number of professors and scholars sponsored by the Forebright Foundation lectured in the law school on courses including International Transaction, International Litigation, International Commercial Law, Comparative Legal Tradition, American Legal System, American Contract Law and Intellectual Property Law. These exchange programs further gave students access to difficult legal systems and different method of legal thinking and analyzing legal issues

Our faculty members also visited foreign law schools and brought back new teaching methods. One of the most successful methods is Legal Clinic which is the fourth such Clinic after Beijing University, Qinghua University and Wuhan University. After our visits, some of our students were sent to study in foreign law schools including McGeorge School of Law and Loyola Law School in the US.

All these methods have proven successful. Many of our students have become lawyers specializing in transnational transactions. They are assisting both the foreign clients in their doing business in China and Chinese clients dealing with foreign businessmen. Some of the lawyers are practicing law in the US, UK or Hong Kong primarily handling transactions with China.

In my view, these methods are particularly useful for the students who are used to the traditional culture and civil law concepts to understand the legal system of other parts of the world and adopt different ways of thinking and analyzing legal issues and to help them face transnational challenges. I hope the unique background of China and our experience are of interest to you and assist our discussions today on educating law students to meet transnational challenges.

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