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Legal Education in Some Countries of the World and Lessons for Legal Education in Vietnam's Vocational Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines legal education (LE) in several countries, including China, Russia, Australia and Thailand and draws lessons for Vietnam, particularly within vocational education institutions. The study shows that these countries consider LE a crucial task, implemented continuously from general education to higher education, with diverse content, methods and strong links to practice. In Vietnam, although LE in vocational institutions has achieved certain results, it still faces limitations in curricula, teaching methods and lecturer capacity. To improve effectiveness, the paper suggests renewing curricula and teaching methods, strengthening lecturer training, connecting theory with practice, diversifying forms of education and fostering students' self-awareness. International experiences, combined with domestic solutions, can enhance LE quality, shape legal consciousness and promote lawful behavior, thereby contributing to social development and international integration.

Keywords: *Legal education; Vocational training; Teaching methods; Lecturer capacity; Legal awareness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Law is a system of rules of conduct and a regulatory instrument promulgated by the state to govern social relations; it expresses the will of the ruling class and is enforced by the state's coercive measures. Law is also an important component of the social superstructure: it is determined by the socio-economic base, yet it can in turn exert influence on that base. Law becomes the concentrated, direct political expression of the ruling class and a sharp instrument through which the state exercises power to realize its political requirements, objectives and content. Law constitutes an indispensable regime and set of norms in modern society; the rule-of-law mechanism is a hallmark indicating that political civilization has developed to a particular historical stage.

Legal education is regarded as a component of educational activity; it possesses its own

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autonomy while relating to other spheres such as the economy, culture and national security and defense. From this perspective, legal education is analogous to the process of an individual's socialization. In other words, legal education is formed and occurs alongside an individual's physiological and psychological development, continuing even until the end of life.

Legal education is always a proactive action carried out by the educating subject with the direct aims of forming legal awareness, attitudes and behavior habits. The farther-reaching goal of legal education is to create social stability and development and to ensure the fullest protection of human rights. Because educational content and target groups vary, legal education needs to diversify its forms and methods to be effective. Specifically, legal education comprises the following main forms:

- a. Legal education in schools;
- b. Legal education through mass media and legal libraries/collections;
- c. Legal education via activities of specialized agencies responsible for legal education and through social organizations and mass movements;
- d. Legal education through the process of law-making, law enforcement and law protection by state agencies;
- e. Legal education through judicial support activities (lawyers, jurists, conciliation bodies);
- f. Legal education through law-awareness competitions, law clubs and integration into cultural, artistic and sports activities, as well as via oral and informal education.

The process of legal education in countries is conducted over long periods, continuously and school-based legal education serves as the foundation across educational levels and training qualifications, combining a variety of legal education methods. By studying the legal education activities of several countries, we can draw practical lessons to further improve legal education in schools in general and legal education at vocational education institutions in Vietnam today.

II. LEGAL EDUCATION IN SOME COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

(A) Legal education in China

The Chinese government and its people have achieved certain successes in building and perfecting the legal system orienting the construction of a modern rule-of-law society.

China is a country with several thousand years of historical civilization. Like other civilizational

achievements across many fields, the process of building China's legal system and the development of rule-of-law thought also has a long history. "Chinese Law" is a volume in the China series. The content of this volume provides readers with a deep and comprehensive understanding of China's legal system through issues such as the legal system and the process of constructing rule-of-law mechanisms; the legislative, judicial and executive mechanisms; a legal framework founded on the constitution; administration according to law - building a service-oriented government model; criminal law and related statutes; civil, commercial and economic law; social law; legal oversight and legal services; legal education and legal literacy development; and the interface between Chinese law and international law.

Legal education in China is given high priority by the Government. The Chinese authorities regard strengthening legal education and raising the people's legal awareness as a top-priority task - an indispensable cultural and spiritual factor for modern Chinese society. The government has made substantial investments in education and training in general and in legal education and training in particular.

In China, general legal education has been integrated into all educational levels. China has established a five-year program for the dissemination of and education in law for the people. To implement this program, China has launched various training formats and legal knowledge refresher courses for officials and state civil servants. Forms of legal education in China are quite diverse: in addition to classroom teaching in schools, many law-awareness classes are opened in rural areas; legal journals are published; and conferences and exhibitions on legal topics are organized.

(B) Legal Education in the Russian Federation

Before the 1990s, in the Soviet Union, a general state program on law and state studies was implemented in schools. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this subject was no longer included as a compulsory discipline in general education schools.

Since 1997, the Education Reform Foundation in the Russian Federation has carried out the project "Legal Education in Schools", with the aim of developing a framework curriculum on legal education to be taught in general education institutions.

At colleges and universities across the Russian Federation (including pedagogical institutions), law courses are offered to students. Specifically, for specialized legal training, the Russian Federation implemented a national target program titled "Development of Legal Education 2001–2005".

(C) Legal Education in the Commonwealth of Australia

Forms of legal dissemination and legal education in Australia are highly diverse. In addition to conventional methods of raising public legal awareness-such as legal education in schools, online legal information, mass media communication, workshops, training sessions, compilation and publication of legal documents and grassroots-level conciliation-some forms have been implemented more strongly in Australia than in Vietnam. These include widespread legal dissemination campaigns, free legal counseling sessions held on designated days and public surveys.

In Australian colleges, legal education differs from that in Vietnam: legal knowledge is not incorporated into the formal core curriculum as an independent subject, but rather is integrated into certain social science courses. Each social science subject contains a component on law.

Legal dissemination and education in schools are mainly conducted through extracurricular activities, legal information materials and dedicated websites tailored for students and teachers. Additionally, activities include organizing workshops, promoting human rights education via the Internet and developing teaching materials to be integrated into school curricula. Specifically, initiatives include: establishing the “Student Information” website; organizing essay and art competitions on legal themes; and creating a dedicated legal education website for teachers.

(D) Legal Education in the Kingdom of Thailand

In Thailand, legal education is carried out continuously from secondary schools to universities. At the secondary level, students take the subject Fundamental Issues of Law, while at universities, students study courses in Law.

The common forms of legal dissemination and education include lectures and talks on law delivered by prosecutors, law faculty lecturers at universities, lawyers, as well as the publication of legal materials and books. To ensure effective legal dissemination, Thailand emphasizes that such activities must be community-based, stemming from the needs of the community, with the guiding principle of meeting the demands of the people rather than being imposed by state authorities.

Additionally, through the participation of law lecturers, law students from certain universities and alumni lawyers (particularly from the Faculty of Law at Thammasat University), Thailand has organized legal aid and legal education activities in two main forms: (i) direct consultation via in-person meetings, telephone, letters or the Internet; and (ii) assistance in handling litigation-related issues for specific groups (those with legitimate grievances, the poor and individuals with no criminal record), excluding litigation in family and marriage matters.

From the study of legal education practices in various countries, the author recognizes that the ultimate goal of education is the comprehensive development of the learner's personality. Most countries regard legal education as a vital task, implemented consistently from secondary schools to vocational and higher education institutions. The content of legal education is diverse and does not shy away from addressing adult-related issues. Nations place strong emphasis on educating learners about major national concerns and societal "problems" that have been highlighted since their school years.

The time devoted to legal education within schools is significant, not to mention the contributions of other forces such as legal institutions, religious organizations and community groups in supporting legal education for students. Legal education methods in these countries are also highly diverse and effective, mobilizing all available resources while introducing innovative educational models that emphasize learners' practical competencies. These include combining formal curricula with extracurricular activities organizing workshops, promoting human rights education through the Internet, developing teaching materials to be integrated into school programs, creating "Student Information" websites organizing essay and art competitions on legal topics and building dedicated websites for teachers.

III. LEGAL EDUCATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN VIETNAM: CURRENT SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

(A) Current Situation of Legal Education in Vocational Education Institutions in Vietnam

Legal education in schools in general and in vocational education institutions in particular, aims at training a workforce that is competent in professional practice, knowledgeable of and compliant with legal regulations in production, business and services, thereby meeting the current and future demands of society. To achieve this objective, legal education in vocational education institutions must foster legal awareness among students, serving as the foundation for lawful conduct.

Legal education is implemented through the subject Law, which is a compulsory component of the general education curriculum. This course provides fundamental knowledge of the legal system of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, including: theories of state and law; core branches of law such as Constitutional Law, Administrative Law, Labor Law, Civil Law, Criminal Law, Law on Vocational Education, Law on Marriage and Family, Anti-Corruption Law, etc. In addition to teaching general legal knowledge, some institutions have incorporated sector-specific legal content into their training programs to meet the requirements of professional

practice, such as Economic Law, Construction Law and others. Through learning and experiential activities, students develop attitudes, trust in the law and habits of lawful behavior.

Students in vocational education institutions are young people who have undergone learning and training throughout their general education. They are creative, highly dynamic and quick to apply acquired knowledge to personal and social life. However, they also exhibit certain limitations, such as impulsiveness, emotional volatility, difficulty in self-control, occasional arrogance, vanity and indulgence. Therefore, legal education for vocational students should not only be delivered through formal curricula but also combined with extracurricular and out-of-class activities to achieve the best outcomes.

According to Circular No. 13/2018/TT-BLĐTBXH dated September 26, 2018, issued by the Minister of Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs, the subject Law is part of the general module group in the training programs at both intermediate and college levels and is compulsory. At the intermediate level, the course consists of 15 hours (9 hours of theory, 5 hours of discussion and exercises and 1 hour of testing). At the college level, the course is 30 hours (18 hours of theory, 10 hours of discussion and exercises and 2 hours of testing).

However, the legal education curriculum still lacks specific standards tailored to each profession. The standardized textbooks remain sketchy and insufficient compared to the breadth of legal knowledge required today. From the author's perspective, the content of the legal education program is overly simplistic and lacks extracurricular knowledge on essential topics such as the functioning of people's courts and procuracies, crime trends and state administration over the population. As a result, students only acquire basic legal knowledge as prescribed by the program, without opportunities for deeper engagement or practical understanding.

In terms of faculty, the professional expertise and practical experience of law lecturers in vocational education institutions remain limited. Most lecturers hold bachelor's degrees in law, with relatively few having master's or doctoral degrees; in some institutions, law courses are even taught by lecturers with backgrounds in political science or by adjunct instructors. The majority of lecturers mainly possess theoretical knowledge, with limited real-world experience, which somewhat undermines the effectiveness of legal education.

Regarding teaching methods and forms, legal education in vocational institutions is still primarily delivered through classroom lectures. Student learning remains dependent on teachers' explanations, with limited self-study, research, discussions, seminars or fieldwork.

Overall, legal education in vocational education institutions in Vietnam still faces many shortcomings and has yet to achieve high effectiveness. The pass rate of students in the Law

subject on their first attempt remains relatively low. In some places, legal education is still treated superficially, resulting in continued instances of student law violations. A minority of students lack self-discipline, underestimate the importance of legal education and fail to comply strictly with the law, leading to violations, social evils and behaviors contrary to cultural traditions and moral standards, such as “trial marriages,” gambling, betting, drinking and other irresponsible behaviors.

Amid the profound impacts of the negative aspects of the market economy, the erosion of ethical values caused by social media, the rise of social vices, materialism and the desire for quick wealth; along with hostile forces undermining political, economic, defense and security stability both regionally and globally; violations of discipline and law have created increasing demands on legal education. Therefore, improving the quality of legal education for students is essential, requiring regular, consistent and systematic implementation with appropriate content and methods.

The reform of legal education for students in vocational institutions today must move toward being modern, practical and tailored to students’ fields of training, while situating legal education in close connection with ideological, political, ethical and traditional education.

(B) Some Recommendations for Legal Education and Training in Vocational Education Institutions in Vietnam

Based on a study of experiences in legal education in several countries around the world, as well as an analysis and assessment of legal education programs in vocational education institutions in Vietnam, the author proposes several recommendations for legal education and training in vocational institutions in Vietnam as follows:

First: Continue renewing the content and curriculum of the law subject in vocational schools

Develop curricula and content that ensure political, scientific and educational values, with the scope of the law subject commensurate with the level of training and qualification. It is necessary to proactively implement various forms and methods suited to each task and activity, tailored to the characteristics of students.

Regularly update and renew content, curriculum and teaching methods in line with the level of education and legal practice. Continuously incorporate newly issued legal normative documents, effectively organize activities to promote compliance with the law and strictly implement legal requirements. Build a healthy legal culture environment in schools that is voluntary, self-disciplined and rigorous.

Second: Strengthen the capacity and qualities of lecturers and teachers of law in vocational education institutions

Law is a subject that requires a high degree of specialization and accuracy in terminology; therefore, emphasis should be placed on training, supplementing and improving the quality of lecturers in state and law to enhance teaching quality.

Law lecturers need to be well-trained in both professional knowledge and teaching methodology. At the same time, appropriate remuneration policies should be adopted for lecturers, along with financial mechanisms to support lecturers in guiding students in practical training. Encourage law lecturers to engage in scientific research and innovate teaching methods, while enhancing their responsibility in disseminating and promoting legal knowledge to students and the community.

Third: Enhance the use of textbook knowledge and make classroom lectures more engaging

Lecturers and teachers need to better materialize textbook knowledge to make lectures more engaging and capture students' attention, meaning they must connect scientific theory with vivid practical realities to explain and illustrate concepts. Greater emphasis should be placed on integrating practical issues of political, economic, socio-cultural and defense-security life into each teaching unit.

To achieve this, lecturers must constantly supplement their practical knowledge, collect relevant real-world information related to their discipline and apply it to guide students in understanding and resolving such issues. Effective application of this method will make lectures more engaging, prevent student boredom and-most importantly-significantly contribute to raising students' awareness of real-life contexts while stimulating their critical thinking in perceiving and explaining such issues.

Fourth: Diversify forms of legal dissemination and education

Renew methods of organizing extracurricular legal education activities, promptly update information and directly influence students' feelings and attitudes. Each form of legal dissemination and education has its own advantages and limitations. Therefore, diversifying forms of legal education is the optimal way to complement one another, maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Forms of legal dissemination and education may include:

Organizing law knowledge contests with engaging rules to stimulate the enthusiasm of participants, where both contestants and the audience can naturally and enjoyably absorb useful

legal content.

Organizing field trips, establishing and operating “Youth with Law” clubs, listening to legal talks (e.g., on local traffic safety violations, social order and security issues), attending court hearings and visiting executive, legislative and judicial agencies.

Combining oral dissemination of law with the distribution of flyers designed to be simple, concise, clear and easy to understand for learners. Messages may also be delivered in short poems or rhymes containing relevant legal ideas, making them familiar and effective.

Fifth: Promote the active and voluntary engagement of students in legal education

In practice, the quality of legal education for students largely depends on their active participation, self-discipline and self-cultivation. Educating students to develop positivity, self-discipline, proper motivation for learning and training and to constantly improve their sense of responsibility and compliance with the law requires school leaders, functional departments and academic faculties to regularly formulate plans and measures for legal education.

Lecturers should foster students’ active and voluntary participation by guiding them in group assignments, encouraging them to study legal textbooks and materials at home in advance and engaging them in solving case studies and classroom discussions. Interaction between students and lecturers should be strengthened.

Lecturers can also diversify methods of assessing students through a combination of written exams oral examinations, presentations of self-study results and group work in class, in order to encourage students’ self-discipline and enthusiasm for legal learning.

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