



Feature

Learning about the Law in Vietnam

By Charisse Dengler

Law school curricula are going through major changes in Vietnam, something that many are happy about. Currently, there are more than 10 schools in Vietnam that teach law using three different kinds of training: traditional school training, in-service training, and remote training.



With graduate study taking an average of two and a half years, the student-to-professor ratio sits somewhere around 70 to 100 students per professor in a traditional school setting. The ratio is higher for remote and in-service training groups.

Ever since the Ministry of Education and Training released its guidelines for law students in 2003, law schools have been working to comply with them. The current system is based almost entirely on theory courses, and dissertations are based on little more than students' personal opinions on issues. Professors and attorneys in Vietnam are desperate for changes to the system. They say that the programs should be more academic and focused on the actual law rather than on personal opinion and theory if Vietnam is going to keep up with the rest of the world in this particular area.

Another problem that many have with the way law is taught in Vietnam is that the study of law is not reserved for graduate students as it is in the United States, Europe, Japan, and other places. Because undergraduates can study law, law courses are somewhat limited in scope, and many feel that by making having a degree a requirement for entering law school, courses would become more challenging and more comprehensive.

"To administer law and justice for individuals and communities requires a deep understanding of life. That's why in many educational systems, only graduate students can study to become doctors or lawyers," a reporter wrote in a VietNamNet Bridge article.

Under the current system, an undergraduate student studying law needs 170 credits (about four years worth of schooling) to graduate. After graduation, students go on to take graduate courses and post-graduate course. These final courses are taken in a foreign language.

However, many would like to see a more systematic approach to foreign language study implemented. Some even think that the acquisition of foreign language skills should be conducted on an individual basis. This would allow students who wish to graduate with post-graduate degrees to simply take tests to prove that their language skills are at the appropriate levels.

Other changes that have been proposed include having law students choose 70% of their courses based on the areas of law they want to go into upon graduation, requiring that some course credits be earned by working in law clinics or law offices, and making a larger proportion of law students' grades dependent on research.

"Our future citizens and lawyers can only compete with those in other countries if our educators throw out the old blanket and start things fresh," a reporter for VietNamNet Bridge wrote.

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