

Original Paper

Research on the Integration of Government and Academic Resources Based on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Platforms: A Case Study of the Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce

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Fund Project

This paper is a phased research result of the general project "Research on the Government-School Integration Innovation Model Based on the Guangzhou ODR Platform" at Guangzhou College of Commerce (2023XJYB20).

Received: June 24, 2024

Accepted: August 02, 2024

Online Published: August 19, 2024

doi:10.22158/wjer.v11n4p136

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v11n4p136>

Abstract

This paper takes the Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce, established in cooperation with the grassroots court of Huangpu District, Guangzhou, as an example. It introduces the advantages of the integration between the Guangzhou ODR platform and university talent resources, the cooperation model, the challenges faced, the evaluation of outcomes, and the future challenges and strategies for cooperation. This case study demonstrates that the collaboration between ODR platforms and university talent resources has inherent advantages and strong feasibility. It effectively enhances the efficiency and quality of dispute mediation on ODR platforms, providing a valuable reference for alleviating the shortage of judicial resources.

Keywords

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), government-academic integration, mediation mechanism

Research Background

The development of ODR platforms is closely related to the diversification of dispute resolution mechanisms in the field of law, known as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). ADR, as a method of

resolving disputes outside of traditional litigation, includes various forms such as mediation and arbitration. Its core concept is to resolve disputes in a flexible and non-confrontational manner, thereby saving time and resources. With the advancement of internet technology, ADR has gradually shifted to online platforms, leading to the emergence of ODR as a new dispute resolution mechanism. ODR platforms not only continue the core concept of ADR but also further optimize the dispute resolution process and efficiency through technological means.

With the rapid development of information technology, ODR platforms have been widely applied globally as an emerging method of dispute resolution. Relying on internet technology, ODR platforms resolve various disputes efficiently and conveniently through online mediation and arbitration, especially in areas such as cross-border e-commerce and consumer protection, where they have demonstrated unique advantages. In China, with the rise of internet courts, the development of ODR platforms has also entered the fast lane. ODR platforms use technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence to provide online mediation and arbitration services, characterized by efficiency and convenience.

As the forefront city of China's reform and opening up, Guangzhou is not only leading in economic development but also gaining attention for its legal environment. Since its establishment, the Guangzhou Internet Court has actively explored online dispute resolution mechanisms, integrating technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and blockchain to create a new dispute resolution platform.

Since the launch of the online dispute resolution platform by the Guangzhou Internet Court in 2019, the platform has highly integrated cutting-edge technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and blockchain. It adopts a "6+1+1+1" dispute resolution model, consisting of "appointment mediation, remote mediation, asynchronous mediation, cross-border mediation, joint mediation, invitation mediation" + "self-settlement" + "judicial confirmation" + "online litigation", achieving a full-process, full-service, and full-time-space multi-dispute resolution process (Lin et al., 2019). The establishment of this platform has handled a large number of disputes for the judiciary, demonstrating its significant potential in reducing litigation pressure and improving dispute resolution efficiency.

The platform's establishment has not only saved judicial resources significantly but also improved the efficiency of dispute resolution. However, despite the Guangzhou Internet Court ODR platform integrating various mediation service resources, there are still issues such as a shortage of high-quality mediation talent, limited professional competence of mediators, and uneven levels of professional expertise. Moreover, in the new situation, disputes in fields such as transportation, healthcare, labor, environment, property, commerce, and administration are becoming more novel, complex, and specialized. The mediation resources integrated by the Guangzhou Internet Court ODR platform cannot fully meet the current dispute resolution needs, and a professionalized and specialized mediation team has yet to be established for different types of disputes (Zhu & Wang, 2022).

Based on the above background, this paper takes the Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of

Commerce, established in cooperation with the grassroots court of Huangpu District, Guangzhou, as an example. It discusses and analyzes the advantages of integrating the ODR platform with university talent resources, the current status of cooperation between the Guangzhou ODR platform and the Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce, the cooperation model, challenges, and strategies. The aim is to broaden the path of integrating online dispute resolution mechanisms with university-government cooperation in China, and to promote the development and construction of ODR platforms.

1. The Advantages of Integrating the Guangzhou ODR Platform with University Talent Resources

The construction and development of the Guangzhou ODR platform are at the forefront of the nation, providing efficient and convenient dispute-resolution avenues for various sectors of society. Universities, especially the resources of faculty and students in law programs, as an important reserve force of legal talent, play a unique and important role in promoting the development of ODR platforms.

1.1 The Advantages of Integrating University Faculty Resources with the ODR Platform

(1) Professional Knowledge and Practical Experience: University law faculty members usually have a solid foundation in legal theory and rich practical experience, enabling them to provide high-level legal consultation and mediation services in the resolution of disputes on ODR platforms. Law faculty are not only familiar with various legal provisions and judicial interpretations but also possess the ability to handle complex legal issues, which is significant for dispute resolution on ODR platforms. Additionally, some interdisciplinary faculty members also possess knowledge related to different professional backgrounds, integrating law with other disciplines to form a high-quality mediation talent pool with a legal background across various professions and industries, such as law and accounting, law and medicine, law and computer science, etc. This foundation is crucial for building a professionalized and specialized mediation team. These talents have a rich reserve of theoretical knowledge, and some faculty members also have substantial practical experience, enabling them to provide professional mediation for the vast number of interdisciplinary and cross-field dispute cases on the ODR platform.

(2) Research Capability and Academic Contributions: Law faculty members' academic research capabilities also provide a solid theoretical foundation for the development of ODR platforms. They can conduct in-depth research in law-related fields, analyze and solve emerging legal disputes, and provide academic support for the rule-making and procedural design of ODR platforms. At the same time, faculty members can promote the research results of ODR platforms by publishing research papers and participating in academic conferences, thereby driving the entire legal community's attention and recognition of ODR. Through collaboration with ODR platforms, faculty can also gain more research materials, conduct case analyses, and theoretical discussions, enriching the content of legal research.

(3) **Teaching and Training Functions:** University law faculty can carry out various forms of teaching and training activities through ODR platforms. For example, faculty can introduce case analyses from ODR platforms in their courses, allowing students to master online mediation and arbitration skills by simulating case handling processes. Moreover, faculty can provide professional training for mediators actually participating in ODR platforms, helping them improve their legal literacy and mediation skills. This teaching and training function not only helps improve the overall level of ODR platforms but also provides new teaching materials and practice platforms for university faculty.

1.2 The Advantages of Integrating University Student Resources with the ODR Platform

(1) **ODR Platforms Provide Learning and Practice Opportunities for Law Students:** For university law students, participating in the mediation work of ODR platforms is a valuable learning and practice opportunity. Students can observe and participate in the actual case-handling process, understanding the actual application of the law, and enhancing their understanding and application of legal provisions. This practical experience not only helps students master the skills of online mediation and arbitration but also improves their legal literacy and professional quality. Additionally, students can encounter real legal issues and social cases during their participation in the mediation of ODR platform cases, which is significant for their future career development.

(2) **Cultivation of Innovation and Practical Ability:** Participating in the mediation of various types of cases on ODR platforms helps cultivate students' innovative thinking and practical abilities. The operation of ODR platform mediation requires knowledge in law, technology, management, and other aspects. Law students can apply legal theory knowledge to solving practical problems during their participation. This comprehensive ability cultivation is important for students' future engagement in legal practice or research work. Additionally, through participation in ODR platforms, students can access the latest applications of legal technology, understand the development trends in the legal industry, and stimulate their interest in and pursuit of innovation.

(3) **Enhancing Social Service and Responsibility Awareness:** University law students, by participating in the mediation process of various cases on ODR platforms, can also enhance their awareness of social service and responsibility. ODR platforms, as a public service tool, aim to provide society with efficient and fair dispute resolution avenues. Students can experience the importance of law in social fairness and justice during their participation in mediation and arbitration, thereby enhancing their sense of social responsibility. Cultivating this sense of responsibility helps students adhere to the ethical norms of the legal profession in their future careers and commit to maintaining social justice and harmony.

Integrating the Guangzhou ODR platform with university law talent resources is feasible and has broad development prospects. The participation of university law faculty and student resources not only provides professional legal knowledge and practical experience for ODR platforms but also offers strong support for their technical development and operational management. At the same time, through collaboration with ODR platforms, university law programs can better achieve the integration of

teaching and practice, cultivating more high-quality legal talents who are adapted to the development of modern legal technology.

2. Current Status of Collaboration Between Guangzhou ODR Platform and Universities

The People's Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce was established in November 2019. Currently, the committee consists of over 40 mediators, including faculty members from the School of Law, psychological counselors, practicing lawyers, labor arbitrators, and people's jurors. Since its establishment, the committee has leveraged the unique strengths of the School of Law and the high-quality professional talent who are passionate about mediation to continuously provide legal consultation services to the public. The committee organizes mediation work based on the specific circumstances of disputes. On one hand, it has improved the legal awareness of village and residential mediation committee staff in the surrounding areas through legal education and training. On the other hand, it provides robust consultation and mediation support for the diverse and localized disputes in the region. The committee has established six specialized groups: family disputes, neighbor relationship disputes, compensation for land acquisition, rental disputes, traffic accidents, labor disputes, and debt disputes. Mediators from different professional fields are assigned to different groups based on the nature of the disputes. To fully utilize the educational function of the mediation committee, faculty mediators lead students from the School of Law to participate in mediation work, allowing students to engage in judicial practice by serving the public. This effectively establishes a collaborative educational system between the government and the university, supporting the comprehensive development of both faculty and students.

Since its inception, the mediators at the university have mediated over a thousand disputes, including marital and family issues, work-related injuries, contract disputes, and demolition compensation cases, with the involved amounts reaching billions of yuan. Statistics show that in 2022 alone, the university's mediation committee handled over one-third of all mediation cases in the area, earning unanimous praise from the surrounding communities. The committee's efforts to innovate in the prevention and resolution of social conflicts, combined with the integration of the ODR platform's mediation mechanism with the university, have played a significant role in effectively preventing and resolving campus conflicts, land acquisition and demolition disputes, traditional family disputes, and other new types of disputes, thus contributing to the construction of a stable and harmonious society.

3. The Construction of the Government-University Collaboration Model on the Guangzhou ODR Platform—A Case Study of Guangzhou College of Commerce People's Mediation Committee

As a forefront city of China's reform and opening-up, Guangzhou has achieved remarkable economic development and has also led the country in legal construction. The People's Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce, as a representative of local universities participating in mediation on the Guangzhou ODR platform, demonstrates an innovative collaboration model between universities

and the judicial system. The mediation committee, formed in cooperation with the local grassroots court through the Guangzhou Internet Court, is the first mediation organization jointly established by a university and a local court in Guangdong Province. This organization has established an offline legal aid center with the Jiulong Court and has also joined the ODR platform to undertake online mediation tasks in the region. The main task of the mediation committee is to provide legal consultation and mediation services, particularly in the fields of civil and commercial disputes and family disputes. The committee members primarily consist of law school faculty, psychological counselors, lawyers, and other professionals who conduct mediation both online and offline. Mediators offer personalized mediation services based on the type of case and the needs of the parties involved. Additionally, the committee regularly organizes legal lectures and training to enhance the professional quality of mediators. The construction of this model primarily includes the following components:

3.1 Establishment of the University Mediation Committee

To promote the continuous improvement and development of the multi-resolution dispute mediation platform in the context of government-university integration, it requires a consensus and deep cooperation between both sides, strengthening their integrated development. The Guangzhou College of Commerce Mediation Committee is mainly composed of professional faculty members from the School of Law, supplemented by faculty from other disciplines, and outstanding students from the law school serving as assistant mediators, forming a professional mediation committee organization. The court and university oversight teams supervise and guide various mediation projects under government-university cooperation, inviting mediation experts from different fields and industries to provide specialized, industry-specific, and professional guidance and training on a regular basis. A well-established mechanism for information communication and learning exchanges is set up to regularly feedback on the mediation situation on the ODR platform, promoting the standardized and professional development of people's mediation in higher education institutions.

3.2 Formulating Mediator Employment System

During the government-university collaboration process, regular recruitment and information sessions are conducted among the faculty of Guangzhou College of Commerce to invite law-related or other relevant professional teachers to join the mediation team. This employment system not only contributes to the expansion of the university mediation organization but also provides a good platform for the growth and development of young teachers. Clear delineation of the responsibilities of professional faculty and part-time mediators is made, especially in defining the "responsibilities, powers, and benefits" of both teachers and mediators. This approach is used to layout the mediation rights and responsibilities of faculty mediators on the ODR platform.

3.3 Categorized Mediation to Leverage Industry and Professional Advantages

The scope of mediation is reasonably arranged, establishing interactive and connected channels to fully utilize the resources and advantages of various academic disciplines in the university, leveraging industry and professional expertise. Different mediation groups are formed to incorporate mediators

from different specialties. The current characteristics of social conflicts, being increasingly diverse and complex, urgently require industry-specific and professional mediation support. Universities are talent hubs in fields such as law, e-commerce, logistics, arts, economics, and medicine, where faculty, as a group with strong professional theoretical and practical skills, apply their expertise to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in mediation processes. In this mediation cooperation process, a government-university integrated collaboration model, characterized by industry and professional distinctions, is formed.

3.4 Operational Mechanism

The mediation committee maintains close cooperation with the Guangzhou Internet Court and other judicial-related institutions, handling various civil and commercial disputes, intellectual property disputes, etc., through a combination of online and offline methods. Mediators conduct online mediation via the ODR platform while utilizing the school's legal resources for legal consultation and the review of mediation documents. The committee also regularly holds legal lectures and training to provide mediators with the latest legal knowledge and mediation techniques. Furthermore, the committee collaborates with external legal experts, inviting senior lawyers, judges, and other professionals to conduct regular lectures and training. These activities not only provide professional skill enhancement opportunities for mediators but also promote exchanges and cooperation between universities and the legal practice community.

3.5 Model Construction

The members of the Guangzhou College of Commerce People's Mediation Committee are all frontline teaching faculty, achieving the integration of theoretical teaching, research, and social practice. Through participation in the work of the mediation committee, faculty and students, mainly from the School of Law, can apply theoretical knowledge to real cases, improving teaching quality. The practical operation of the mediation committee also provides rich case material and data support for the law school's academic research, promoting research in related fields. For example, in handling intellectual property disputes, the committee combined the college's research achievements in the field of intellectual property to develop specialized mediation plans. This integration of teaching and research not only improves the quality of mediation work but also enhances the academic influence of the college.

The People's Mediation Committee of Guangzhou College of Commerce, as a typical example of the integration of universities with the Guangzhou ODR platform, has established a comprehensive organizational structure and operational mechanism by integrating the faculty and student resources of the university's law school. This provides an efficient and convenient way to resolve social disputes. This model not only enhances the service quality of the ODR platform but also provides abundant practical material for teaching and research at the university.

4. Challenges in Collaboration Between the ODR Platform and Universities

4.1 *Limited Enthusiasm of University Faculty for Participating in ODR Platform Mediation*

Among the university faculty, there are many professionals with legal backgrounds, including lawyers, psychological counselors, and industry experts. This mediation team, consisting of highly educated professionals with specialized or normative legal knowledge structures, possesses systematic professional theoretical knowledge and strong learning and practical abilities, which gives them relatively more opportunities and compensation for related part-time jobs in society. Additionally, whether it is people's mediation, industry mediation, professional mediation, or lawyer mediation on the ODR platform, the subsidy model for people's mediators in the "People's Mediation Law" is still uniformly applied, which affects the work enthusiasm and willingness of various mediators. Therefore, the motivation of university faculty to participate in dispute mediation on the ODR platform is limited.

4.2 *Lack of Long-term and Broad Integration Development Mechanisms*

In long-term practice, the courts have evolved into the main role in dispute resolution, taking on roles such as initiator, organizer, and implementer, far beyond their responsibilities. Given the limited judicial resources and the overload of cases, the courts are unable to provide more resource support for the construction and development of the ODR multi-resolution dispute platform. Additionally, due to the limitations of court functions and insufficient authority, the courts cannot uniformly manage the mediation organizations established by universities or implement binding measures, making it difficult to promote the long-term, deep, and broad integration of the online dispute resolution system with universities.

4.3 *Inadequate Training of University Mediators by Courts and Mismatch with New Technologies in Mediation Techniques*

To some extent, this affects the efficiency and effectiveness of dispute resolution. Currently, the training provided by the courts to mediators mainly focuses on the experience of resolving disputes offline, whereas the ODR platform employs a technology-intensive dispute resolution method, which requires mediators to adapt to new requirements in both technology and mediation techniques. Therefore, the ability of mediators to innovate and change traditional dispute resolution techniques based on new technologies still needs to be further improved, which has a significant impact on the results and quality of government-university integration.

5. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Government-Academia Integration Model

1. **Social Impact:** Since its establishment, the Guangzhou College of Commerce Mediation Committee has mediated hundreds of disputes and has received widespread praise from all sectors of society. Through the ODR platform, the Mediation Committee can process various disputes more quickly and efficiently, thereby enhancing social harmony.

2. **Academic Impact:** The establishment of the Mediation Committee has not only provided students with practical opportunities but also offered rich case materials for academic research. The research

results in the field of mediation by the Law School of Guangzhou College of Commerce have gained recognition in academia and have provided references for other universities and social organizations.

6. Challenges and Countermeasures for Future Cooperation between ODR Platforms and Universities

6.1 Challenges

(1) **Insufficient Legal Norms and Policy Support:** Although the development of the ODR platform has achieved significant results, there are still some deficiencies in legal norms and policy support. At present, China has not yet fully established specialized laws and regulations for the ODR platform, and the provisions regarding its operational mechanisms and legal effect are not sufficiently clear. In addition, the level of policy support needs to be strengthened, especially in terms of funding, technology, and talent. To address these challenges, the government should accelerate the legislative process, formulate relevant laws and regulations, and clarify the legal status and operational rules of the ODR platform. At the same time, the government and judicial institutions should strengthen policy support for the ODR platform, provide more funding and technical support, and ensure its smooth operation.

(2) **Limitations of Faculty and Student Participation:** Although the participation of university faculty and students in the operation of the ODR platform has had significant effects, there are also some limitations in practical operation. For example, the primary responsibilities of university faculty are teaching and research, which limits the time and energy they can invest in the ODR platform. In addition, while students can gain practical experience on the platform, they may face challenges when handling complex cases due to their lack of sufficient practical experience. To overcome these limitations, universities and courts should establish more flexible cooperation mechanisms, such as hiring part-time teachers or establishing internship systems, to increase faculty and student participation. Additionally, training and guidance for students should be enhanced to improve their practical abilities and professional qualities.

(3) **Technical and Data Challenges:** As a dispute resolution method based on the internet and information technology, the ODR platform's operation relies on advanced technical support and data management. However, the ODR platform currently faces challenges in terms of technological development and data security. For example, the platform's data protection and privacy security issues have not been fully resolved, and the cost of technological updates and maintenance is high. To address these challenges, the ODR platform should increase investment in technology to enhance the platform's technological level and data security guarantees. Additionally, universities and courts should strengthen cooperation to jointly promote the innovation and development of ODR technology, providing technical support for the platform's long-term operation.

6.2 Countermeasures

(1) **Improving the Quality of Legal Education:** The cooperation between the ODR platform and

universities will further promote the reform and development of legal education. Through participation in the operation of the ODR platform, law students at universities will be able to gain more practical opportunities, enhancing their legal literacy and professional skills. At the same time, teachers will be able to conduct more in-depth legal research and teaching through real cases on the platform. In the future, universities should continue to strengthen cooperation with the ODR platform, promoting the integration of practical teaching and theoretical research, and cultivating more high-quality legal professionals for society.

(2) Promoting the Development of Diversified Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: As an important part of diversified dispute resolution mechanisms, the ODR platform will play a more significant role in the future legal system. Through cooperation with universities, the ODR platform can not only improve the efficiency and quality of dispute resolution but also promote the development of diversified dispute resolution mechanisms. In the future, universities and courts should continue to deepen cooperation, explore more innovative dispute resolution methods, and provide more diverse and flexible legal services to society.

(3) Promoting the Construction of a Rule of Law Society: The cooperation between the ODR platform and universities is of great significance for promoting the construction of a rule of law society. By providing efficient and convenient legal services, the ODR platform can enhance society's legal awareness and literacy, promoting social harmony and stability. At the same time, as important institutions for training legal professionals, universities can provide more high-quality legal practitioners for society through participation in the operation of the ODR platform, thereby advancing the construction of a rule of law society. In the future, universities and courts should continue to strengthen cooperation, jointly promoting the construction of a rule of law society, and ensuring social fairness, justice, and the rule of law.

Conclusion

The cooperation between ODR (Online Dispute Resolution) platforms and universities represents a beneficial exploration of the integration of modern legal technology and educational practice. Through the participation of university faculty and students, the ODR platform not only enhances the quality and efficiency of dispute resolution but also provides valuable practical materials for legal education and research in universities. This cooperative model is significant for improving the quality of legal services, promoting the development of diversified dispute resolution mechanisms, and advancing the construction of a rule of law society. In the future, as technology continues to advance and the legal environment improves, the cooperation between ODR platforms and universities will further deepen, providing more efficient and equitable legal services to society.

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