

# Current Status and Countermeasures for Cultivating Legal Literacy Among College Students in the New Era

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**Abstract:** *As the talent reserve and vital force for social development, the level of legal literacy among college students directly impacts the quality of building socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Therefore, enhancing the legal literacy of college students and helping them cultivate a more positive legal mindset has become an urgent issue for contemporary society. This paper primarily examines the current state of legal literacy cultivation among contemporary university students in the new era, including their lack of legal faith and insufficient awareness of self-advocacy. It examines the central role and implementation methods of legal education in higher education institutions, proposing that universities should increase the weight of relevant legal education courses, strengthen the practical components in legal curricula, and scientifically guide students to enhance critical thinking and dialectically address social, legal, and ethical issues. This approach aims to help contemporary university students develop a firm legal consciousness.*

**Keywords:** University students; Legal literacy; Current state; Countermeasures.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Legal literacy broadly refers to a citizen's ability to understand and apply legal knowledge. A civilized and harmonious nation should ensure that all its citizens possess sound legal knowledge and a strong sense of legal ethics. As higher education institutions whose fundamental objectives include cultivating well-rounded citizens for societal progress, it is imperative to integrate the forging and nurturing of legal consciousness into the educational process. However, with the changing times, the educational subjects and environment faced by higher education are also evolving. For legal education in universities to be truly effective, institutions must fully consider the cognitive characteristics of diverse students within complex and multifaceted realities, thereby formulating corresponding strategies for cultivating legal literacy among university students.

## 2. CURRENT STATE OF LEGAL LITERACY CULTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE NEW ERA

### 2.1 Lack of Legal Faith and Indifference to Law

Entering the "Internet+" era, information spreads at unprecedented speeds, and cultural collisions between domestic and international spheres intensify. The development of information networks has brought profound changes to all aspects of society. However, the current cohort of post-2000s college students, exposed to diverse cultural influences at an early age, is more susceptible to temptation and testing, leading to confusion. This often results in cognitive biases and misunderstandings about the law. At this stage, students' psychological development is immature; they lack social experience, and they lack the spiritual "soft power" necessary to nourish their intellectual growth. This vulnerability can easily foster the emergence of unlawful behavior.

### 2.2 Lack of Legal Knowledge

While contemporary college students are curious about emerging phenomena, they often overlook trap prevention and rights protection during engagement—primarily due to insufficient legal knowledge. The rise of internet finance has spawned lending platforms targeting university students under the guise of "campus loans." These platforms employ predatory lending tactics to trap students in debt crises, extort them, and even resort to physical harm. Simultaneously, credit tools like "Huabei" and "Jiebei" have proliferated among students riding the wave of internet growth. Many students, driven by momentary desires, recklessly engage in illegal lending activities without considering the consequences of poor credit decisions, turning a blind eye to potential legal risks.

### **2.3 Lack of Self-Protection Awareness and Insufficient Practical Experience**

College students' curiosity about novelty makes them prime targets for criminals. In recent years, the "part-time job craze" has swept campuses. Exploiting students' limited social experience and eagerness to earn money, criminals have orchestrated scams targeting them. College students working part-time during their free hours often lack a legally recognized employment relationship with their employers. This leaves many labor protection regulations unable to effectively safeguard them, creating a legal vacuum where unscrupulous employers frequently exploit them. Even when aware of their rights, most students, constrained by limited experience in asserting their rights and insufficient resources to pursue legal action, choose to endure the injustice silently. This results in missed opportunities for valuable legal practice, creating a vicious cycle that hinders the accumulation of personal legal experience.

## **3. REASONS FOR THE SHORTCOMINGS IN LEGAL LITERACY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE NEW ERA**

### **3.1 Insufficient Emphasis on Legal Education in Higher Education Institutions**

On one hand, universities fail to prioritize legal education sufficiently, resulting in inadequate investment and a suboptimal teaching environment. Some institutions even neglect cultivating students' legal literacy altogether. On the other hand, while certain universities organize themed legal education activities, these are often infrequent and superficial—such as bulletin boards or lectures—failing to engage students meaningfully. Such token efforts fall short of enhancing students' legal literacy. If universities persist in merely conducting legal activities that few students wish to participate in and only consider confining students to specific environments for learning legal knowledge, the predicament of legal education for college students will inevitably remain unchanged.

### **3.2 Lack of a Comprehensive Teaching System in University Legal Courses**

Legal education suffers from serious deficiencies in Chinese universities. Currently, the teaching of legal courses still lacks a comprehensive teaching system. The content of legal education courses is relatively fragmented, with insufficient and poorly allocated course hours. Historically, China's legal education in universities has primarily relied on the course "Thought, Morality, and Legal Foundations." As a subsidiary of moral education, legal education has long failed to become an independent discipline bearing educational responsibilities, significantly diminishing the effectiveness of rule-of-law instruction. Simultaneously, an overemphasis on research output and graduate employment rates has caused institutions to neglect cultivating students' legal comprehension and practical application skills. Classroom instruction remains dominated by traditional lecture-based teaching, with limited expansion of practical components. This pedagogical model is detrimental to enhancing students' legal literacy.

### **3.3 Lack of a Dedicated Legal Education Faculty**

Faculty serve as the primary foundation for legal education, viewed by students as exemplars of legal spirit, and play a crucial role in cultivating legal awareness among university students. However, universities have consistently failed to develop an independent, specialized legal education faculty. Legal course instruction is often undertaken by part-time instructors from philosophy and social science disciplines. These adjunct faculty lack the professional expertise inherent to legal professionals, resulting in teaching outcomes that fall far short of expectations. Concurrently, legal education in universities is delivered through the course "Thought, Morality, and Legal Foundations," which is classified under the ideological and political education system. Ideological and political instructors themselves lack specialized legal training and professional understanding. This teaching model undermines the independence of legal education in higher education, making it difficult for students to prioritize the study of legal knowledge.

## **4. STRATEGIES FOR CULTIVATING LEGAL LITERACY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE NEW ERA**

### **4.1 Increase Investment in University Legal Education and Establish Rule-of-Law Promotion Platforms**

University students are the future builders of society, entrusted with the responsibility of constructing a

harmonious and prosperous community. Their legal literacy is a crucial safeguard for China's effective advancement of rule-of-law development. Universities should prioritize enhancing students' legal literacy within their educational mission, elevating legal education to equal importance with other specialized disciplines. This commitment must be reflected in instructional design, with legal content integrated into core curricula. Concurrently, universities should increase investment in legal education to establish specialized platforms for promoting legal awareness, thereby expanding outreach activities across campuses. Universities can intensify training to enhance the legal proficiency of all faculty members, establishing a scientific mechanism for cultivating teachers' legal cognitive skills. This provides comprehensive legal knowledge support for teaching activities and subtly fosters a positive atmosphere for legal learning on campus. Universities can implement incentive measures to promote legal culture, encouraging faculty to actively participate in self-directed learning and exchange activities. This will continuously broaden their legal knowledge base and deepen their understanding of legal culture, thereby effectively helping students enhance their legal literacy. Universities should strengthen the development of platforms for equal communication between faculty and students, facilitating better legal cultural exchange activities. Institutions should also integrate the concept of legal culture dissemination into curriculum design, offering elective courses on legal culture tailored to students' actual interests and learning habits, thereby promoting the effective implementation of legal education in higher education.

#### **4.2 Refining the Higher Education Curriculum System and Innovating Legal Education Content**

While leveraging traditional educational tools and classroom advantages, universities should actively explore new pedagogical models. Beyond imparting legal knowledge, classrooms should focus on helping students develop scientific legal concepts, cultivate faith in the law, and strengthen legal skills. As the role of law in daily life becomes increasingly prominent, college students' interest in studying law has grown significantly. Institutions should strive to create favorable learning conditions for students based on practical needs, helping them resolve real-world legal challenges. One approach is to refine the legal minor curriculum system, such as increasing the proportion of elective courses on laws closely related to daily life, like the Marriage Law and Labor Law. Given the constraints on class hours and content in foundational legal courses at universities, enhancing the efficiency of quantitative legal education requires instructors to break away from traditional teaching models and innovate through experiential and practical teaching methods. Instructors can employ case-based teaching, using concrete cases to guide students in analyzing legal issues, comprehending legal knowledge, grasping the spirit of the law, and mastering foundational legal skills. For instance, teachers may organize role-playing exercises to immerse students in case discussions, thereby deepening their understanding of relevant legal concepts. Simultaneously, educators should actively pursue innovations in legal popularization, dissemination, and teaching methodologies. By leveraging new media formats popular among college students—such as short video creation and songwriting—and integrating contemporary social news topics of widespread interest, they can organically blend legal culture instruction with activities like flag-raising ceremonies, knowledge quizzes, and mock trials. This approach fully stimulates students' proactive engagement in learning.

#### **4.3 Strengthen the Development of Professional Legal Faculty and Enhance Practical Teaching Components**

A robust faculty team is a crucial foundation for enhancing the legal literacy of university students in the new era. On one hand, professional instructors can leverage their expertise to delve deeper into the intrinsic relationship between law and society within existing curricula, thereby improving teaching quality and enabling students to gain a profound understanding of course content rather than merely rote learning. On the other hand, faculty can offer valuable specialized advice in numerous areas, such as curriculum design and improvement, as well as program development and adjustment, thereby more effectively helping students expand the depth and breadth of their legal knowledge. Universities should place greater emphasis on building professional legal education faculty teams, providing personalized legal education services tailored to students at different psychological stages by integrating public opinion hotspots and social issues. Additionally, institutions must prioritize strengthening legal practice components in teaching. Legal practice should serve as a vital supplement to enhancing students' legal literacy. The university's legal education philosophy should be integrated into diverse campus cultural activities, fully implementing various legal practice initiatives such as club activities, psychological culture festivals, and science and technology festivals. These provide excellent opportunities for students to engage in legal learning and reinforce their legal awareness, helping them grasp the essence of the rule of law and cultivate sound legal thinking and behavioral habits through participation and practice.

## 5. CONCLUSION

A sound legal system is the foundation of a civilized society, and cultivating citizens' legal literacy is a crucial safeguard for a nation's continuous progress. Building legal education in higher education institutions is not an overnight endeavor; cultivating students' legal literacy requires the concerted efforts of generations. Contemporary universities must consistently uphold the educational goal of fostering virtue through higher education, recognize the vital role and profound significance of legal education, and dedicate thoughtful planning, diligent implementation, and innovative approaches to nurturing students' legal literacy. Only through continuous summarization, accumulation, and refinement in practice can effective strategies for cultivating students' legal literacy be achieved.

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