

Study on the Problems and Paths of Cultivating Rule of Law Thinking among College Students in the New Era

Liu Nan¹, Wang Zengyun^{1,2,*}

¹Southwest Medical University, Luzhou, Sichuan, 646000, China

²Jos é Rizal University, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, 1550, Philippines

*Corresponding author

Keywords: New era; college students; rule of law thinking

Abstract: This article aims to explore the issues and pathways of cultivating the rule of law thinking among college students in the new era. It defines the connotation of rule of law thinking, including the pursuit of constitutional supremacy, exercising rights in accordance with the law, safeguarding rights in accordance with the law, fulfilling duties in accordance with the law, and the principle of procedural justice. It elaborates on the importance of cultivating rule of law thinking among college students, which not only contributes to the realization of the overall goal of governing the country according to law but also promotes the comprehensive development of law-based management in universities and college students. In order to effectively cultivate rule of law thinking among college students, this article proposes four pathways: firstly, universities should establish the rule of law within universities by improving internal rule of law mechanisms, enhancing legal publicity and education, and nurturing a culture of the rule of law; secondly, universities should focus on the "supply side" to optimize classrooms, integrate legal education into professional courses, and enhance the legal literacy of college students; thirdly, universities should rely on activity platforms to deepen legal practice, organize various legal practice activities, and enable college students to experience the spirit of the rule of law through practice; fourthly, parents should create a good atmosphere for family legal education, leverage the unique role of family education, and jointly cultivate the rule of law thinking of college students.

Against the backdrop of the new era, the construction of the rule of law has emerged as a crucial cornerstone for the nation's development, while the cultivation of rule of law thinking has gradually become a focal point of attention across various sectors of society. As the future and hope of the nation, the cultivation of rule of law thinking among college students is particularly vital. The nurturing of rule of law thinking not only assists college students in establishing correct values and promoting their comprehensive development but also serves as a pivotal factor in driving forward the nation's process of legal governance and achieving social harmony and stability. However, at present, there are still numerous problems and challenges in the cultivation of rule of law thinking among college students. This article aims to address these issues by clarifying the essence of rule of law thinking, elucidating the importance of cultivating such thinking among college students, and proposing targeted pathways for cultivation. The goal is to provide valuable reference and guidance for rule of law education in universities.

1. The Basic Connotation of Rule of Law Thinking Among College Students in the New Era

1.1 The Connotation of Rule of Law Thinking

Rule of law thinking is a deep-level thinking mode based on the concept of the rule of law, which requires people to follow legal principles in decision-making and actions, emphasizing legitimacy, justice, and fairness. Compared with legal thinking, rule of law thinking not only focuses on the professionalism and technicality of law but also emphasizes the universal values and social effects of the rule of law. Rule of law thinking emphasizes putting people first, regarding law as a tool to maintain social order and safeguard people's rights and interests, rather than merely a technical means. This way of thinking aims to cultivate people's faith in the rule of law, making the rule of law the daily behavioral norms of people and promoting the legalization process of society. In contrast, legal thinking focuses more on the interpretation and application of legal provisions and is a professional occupational thinking. Rule of law thinking is a way of integrating rule of law principles into daily decision-making and behaviors, requiring people to always uphold the spirit of the rule of law in thinking and actions to ensure the legality and justice of behaviors. Legal thinking, on the other hand, focuses more on legal professionals' interpretation and application of legal provisions and cases^[1]. Although rule of law thinking and legal thinking overlap, they have different focuses and together constitute an important part of the rule of law culture.

1.2 Key Points in Cultivating Rule of Law Thinking Among College Students

1.2.1 Cultivating the Value Pursuit of Constitutional Supremacy

"To adhere to governing the country according to law, we must first adhere to governing the country according to the constitution, and to govern according to law, we must first adhere to governing according to the constitution." For college students, the cultivation of rule of law thinking should start with a profound understanding of the fundamental status of the constitution. The existence of the constitution is a prerequisite for the rule of law, and its effective implementation is the cornerstone of building a rule of law country. Therefore, college students need to comprehensively understand and grasp the basic rules and values of the constitution, clarify the goals and directions of national development, and the basic principles and measures formulated to achieve the well-being of the people.

In addition, college students should actively embrace the authority of the constitution and establish a firm belief in the constitution. The vitality of law lies in being believed, and this is especially true for the constitution. Upholding the authority of the constitution means defending the common will of the country and the people. College students should deeply understand that defending the dignity of the constitution is defending the dignity of the country and the people. Only by truly acknowledging and believing in the constitution from the bottom of their hearts will college students consciously follow the spirit of the constitution, thereby demonstrating reverence and obedience to the constitution.

In the process of cultivating rule of law thinking, college students should also use constitutionality as the criterion for behavior. This means that when observing social phenomena, analyzing conflicts and disputes, and resolving legal issues, they should use the constitution as a guideline and standard. This thinking guided by the constitution is a concrete manifestation and sublimation of the belief in the rule of law, as well as the organic unity of worldview and methodology. Therefore, college students need to learn to independently judge in accordance with the values, basic provisions, and procedures of the constitution. This is the basic requirement for cultivating rule of law thinking among college students and is also the necessary path for them to

become qualified practitioners of the rule of law^[2].

1.2.2 Cultivating the Thinking Mode of Exercising Rights, Safeguarding Rights, and Fulfilling Duties According to Law

Firstly, we need to guide college students to abandon traditional privileged thinking and cultivate a new concept of power. This legal thinking education should not only teach them how to exercise power correctly and enhance their political discernment but also help them break free from the constraints of bureaucratic culture and the concept of rule by man, enabling them to actively supervise whether power truly serves the people and whether it conforms to the interests of the masses. We must firmly resist the phenomenon of power being above the law and using power to suppress the law, ensuring that power operates within the track of the rule of law.

Secondly, we need to change the mindset of college students relying on private remedies and cultivate a thinking mode that starts with public rights protection. Universities should combine students' campus life and future career development to educate them on actively safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests and cultivate their awareness and ability to safeguard rights. Through such education, we hope that college students can develop the habit of observing, analyzing, and reasoning problems from the perspective of rights, thus more actively safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests^[3].

Lastly, we need to help college students overcome the mindset of avoiding responsibility and cultivate their sense of responsibility. Only by enabling college students to form self-discipline regarding rules and a sense of responsibility for society can they clearly distinguish between legality and illegality and use the law as a guide in decision-making. Through such cultivation, we hope that college students can make respecting and abiding by the law their value pursuit and conscious action, becoming law-abiding citizens.

1.2.3 Cultivating the Principle of Procedural Justice

Procedures are often referred to as "visible justice," serving as the cornerstone of the legitimacy of the rule of law, while procedural thinking is the concrete manifestation of rule of law thinking in practical operations. To cultivate the rule of law thinking among college students, it is necessary to first foster their awareness of rules. This means that college students should follow established rules as guidelines in their actions, always treating rules as the starting point for their actions and guiding principles for problem-solving. The cultivation of evidence legality thinking is also crucial. The core of rule of law thinking lies in the ability to substantiate facts through legal and valid evidence chains. Therefore, it is essential to educate college students to have an awareness of evidence, learn to collect evidence legally, and master clear, objective, and verifiable methods of evidence analysis, which is crucial for refining their procedural thinking. The cultivation of bottom-line thinking is equally indispensable. Procedural justice is the minimum requirement for judicial fairness and the foundation for upholding the dignity of the constitution and laws. When educating college students, the importance of due process should be emphasized, helping them understand that only by following due process can the abuse of public power be effectively constrained, and informal networks and hidden rules be eliminated. At the same time, college students should be guided to resolve problems and conflicts through legal procedures rather than relying on illegitimate means or relationships. Only in this way can their actions remain on the track of the rule of law, adhering to the bottom line of avoiding mistakes.

2. The Significance of Cultivating Rule of Law Thinking Among College Students in the New Era

2.1 Conducive to Advancing the Overall Goal of Governing the Country According to Law

The rule of law is the cornerstone of a country and an indispensable element in the modernization process. Whether it is the governance of the state or the daily lives of the people, it requires the guidance and regulation of the law. Legalization is an interactive process that requires not only sound legal systems as support but also people's inner belief in and respect for the rule of law. However, the greatest challenge facing the current legal construction in China is the lack of rule of law thinking. Despite significant progress at the legal level, we still face enormous challenges at the conceptual level. Without rule of law thinking, even with perfect top-level design, the implementation of the rule of law will become extremely difficult^[4].

In the advancement of China's rule of law process, many problems have arisen, the root of which lies in the lack of rule of law thinking. This is related to human nature and China's millennia-old tradition of rule by man. In the face of human wisdom and desires, the law sometimes appears inadequate. People can highly respect the law or manipulate it at their will. In such circumstances, even with comprehensive laws, they may lose their effectiveness due to the lack of rule of law thinking.

Therefore, cultivating citizens' rule of law thinking is crucial. This requires us to guide people to establish a rule of law concept, respect the authority of the law, and consciously abide by legal provisions through education, propaganda, and various other means. Only in this way can we truly achieve the goal of a rule of law country, making the law a powerful weapon for upholding social justice and stability.

2.2 Conducive to Promoting the Implementation of Law-based Campus Governance in Universities

Against the backdrop of comprehensively advancing the rule of law in the country, legal consciousness has permeated every level of the nation, society, and every citizen. The rule of law is not only a fundamental social consciousness of a country but also the cornerstone guiding the behavior of every institution and individual. As crucial pillars of national development, universities bear the responsibility of nurturing future nation-builders; thus, implementing law-based campus governance is particularly significant.

To achieve law-based campus governance, universities must rely on legal frameworks to deeply cultivate the rule of law thinking among college students. The cultivation of this rule of law thinking aims to help students understand the importance of the rule of law profoundly and establish a belief in it. When students possess rule of law thinking, they will actively participate in the practice of law-based campus governance, promoting its deep implementation and forming a virtuous interactive cycle.

College students, as essential components of society, are not only active participants and builders of national governance but also crucial reserves for our party's future. Their rule of law thinking will directly influence the modernization process of the country's governance system. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of rule of law thinking among college students is not only of significant importance for achieving law-based campus governance but also a crucial link in promoting the modernization of the entire national governance system.

2.3 Conducive to Promoting the Comprehensive Development of College Students

Universities, as the core organizations responsible for quality education of college students, have

made significant improvements in the overall quality of our country's college students through continuous efforts. However, there are still some areas for improvement, such as insufficient awareness of rules and rights protection. To address these issues, it is particularly important to cultivate rule of law thinking among college students. Rule of law thinking can enable college students to genuinely identify with the law from the bottom of their hearts and abandon traditional rule by man thinking.

"Law" is a core component of the rule of law system, and all powers and rights must be authorized and protected by the law. Through the cultivation of rule of law thinking, college students can clearly understand which powers are legitimate and which rights are protected by the law. Consequently, in their future lives and work, they will be able to solve problems within the framework of the law and safeguard their own rights.

Therefore, against the backdrop of comprehensively advancing the rule of law in the country, cultivating rule of law thinking among college students is not only an inherent requirement to enhance their own qualities but also a key factor in promoting their comprehensive development. Through the cultivation of rule of law thinking, college students can better adapt to the development of society and become qualified citizens who abide by laws and possess high legal literacy.

3. Constructing Pathways for Cultivating Rule of Law Thinking among College Students in the New Era

3.1 Deepening Law-Based Campus Governance and Cultivating a Culture of the Rule of Law

The specific practice of comprehensively advancing the rule of law in universities is manifested as law-based campus governance, which mutually promotes the cultivation of rule of law thinking among college students, forming a virtuous cycle. To cultivate the rule of law thinking among college students, universities should integrate the principles of the rule of law into the entire process of education governance and talent cultivation, thereby shaping a campus environment rich in the rule of law culture. Firstly, universities should gradually replace traditional administrative governance systems with legal governance systems, encouraging students to participate in the process of law-based campus governance, such as participating in rule-making and the management of public affairs, to enhance their awareness and ability to apply the law. At the same time, universities need to improve substantive and procedural systems related to students' interests, ensuring that students feel fairness, justice, and openness in the implementation of these systems, thereby fostering an understanding, identification, and cultivation of rule of law thinking. Secondly, it is crucial to enhance the rule of law thinking of governance entities in universities. Whether it is university-level leaders, departmental management, or counselors, they should adhere to the rule of law as a criterion, examine the legality of their own actions, and set an example of the rule of law for students. Faculty and staff should also establish a consciousness of governing the country according to law, using rule of law thinking to handle various issues, subtly influencing the formation of students' rule of law thinking. Finally, creating a strong campus culture of the rule of law is indispensable. Universities should make full use of various resources and platforms to disseminate legal knowledge, organize legal activities, and make the rule of law a conscious habit and spiritual benchmark in students' daily lives, consciously resisting and opposing any behaviors that violate the spirit of the rule of law. Through these measures, universities can not only meet the requirements of comprehensively governing the country according to law but also cultivate qualified talents with a high level of rule of law literacy.

3.2 Grounded in the "Supply Side" and Seeking Classroom Optimization

In the new era, law-based courses for college students need to undergo structural reforms from the supply side to meet the practical needs of different groups. To achieve this, a comprehensive and

perfect system of law-based courses should be constructed, with ideological and political theory courses as the main channel, while also providing optional law-based courses to address students' legal confusions. These courses should be problem-oriented, targeting the legal issues that students may encounter in their study, life, and employment processes, providing targeted training in rule of law thinking. Moreover, integrating rule of law thinking into professional courses by tapping into various legal resources in different disciplines will form a comprehensive, all-encompassing, and effective system of law-based courses. Meanwhile, the cultivation of rule of law thinking should be combined with enrollment education, entrepreneurship and innovation education, and counselor work to ensure that rule of law thinking runs through the entire college life of students. In terms of teaching methods, single teaching modes and evaluation systems should be abandoned in favor of diverse cultivation methods, such as case-based teaching, simulated courtrooms, and debate classrooms. These practical teaching methods can stimulate students' analytical, speculative, and predictive abilities, allowing them to experience the litigation process firsthand in the classroom, feel the fairness and justice of procedures, and deepen their understanding of legal knowledge. Drawing on international experience, such as Japan's participatory and research-oriented teaching new normal and the UK's case-based inspirational teaching, can further enhance the effectiveness of cultivating rule of law thinking among Chinese college students. Through these measures, we can promote a shift from demand-driven to supply-driven models in law-based courses for college students, achieving the output of educational resources that are nurturing, precise, and effective.

3.3 Relying on Activity Platforms to Deepen Rule of Law Practice

The deepening, consolidation, and enhancement of college students' rule of law thinking must be closely integrated with practical experiences. Through participation in diverse practical scenarios, students can elevate their understanding of rule of law thinking from a sensory level to a rational one, and subsequently translate these rational understandings into tangible rule of law behaviors. Social practices, activities, and various on-campus student organizations provide invaluable opportunities for students to expand their horizons, enrich their life experiences, and cultivate rule of law thinking through active engagement. Therefore, universities should actively organize a variety of on-campus practical activities, such as themed class meetings, student club activities, and "Constitutional Morning Reading" sessions, encouraging students to experience, learn, and apply rule of law principles during these activities. Moreover, universities should collaborate with external legal institutions to provide off-campus legal practice opportunities for students, such as court hearings and prison visits, enabling them to experience firsthand the practical operation of the rule of law and internalize rule of law thinking. Additionally, enhancing the practical abilities of teachers is crucial. Establishing a high-quality, high-level team of legal education instructors requires not only rich theoretical knowledge but also extensive practical experience to better guide students in participating in rule of law practices. Furthermore, universities can introduce outstanding legal experts from external legal teams to inject new vitality into the cultivation of rule of law thinking among students. Finally, standardizing the assessment system for students' rule of law practice activities is essential to ensure their effectiveness and to measure the level of students' rule of law thinking. Through the comprehensive application of these measures, we can effectively promote the deepening, consolidation, and enhancement of college students' rule of law thinking, laying a solid foundation for nurturing talents with a high level of rule of law literacy.

3.4 Cultivating a Favorable Environment for Family Rule of Law Education

The cultivation of college students' rule of law thinking is a systematic project that requires collaborative efforts from families, schools, society, and other stakeholders to construct a comprehensive nurturing framework. In this process, family rule of law education plays a fundamental and critical role. As the first teachers of their children, parents' rule of law literacy and

parenting styles directly influence the formation of their children's rule of law thinking. Therefore, in the new era, the cultivation of college students' rule of law thinking must prioritize innovative family rule of law education. Parents should discard traditional utilitarian education concepts and emphasize their children's holistic development, especially in the cultivation of rule of law personality, concepts, and thinking. Additionally, parents should continuously improve their own rule of law literacy, regulate their behavior strictly, and create a favorable family environment for rule of law education. Through democratic and egalitarian family education methods, respecting children's independent personalities and behavioral habits, guiding children to actively participate in discussions on rule of law issues, sparking their interest in rule of law learning, and helping them develop good rule of law thinking and behavioral habits. Only under the influence of a favorable family rule of law education can college students' rule of law thinking be effectively cultivated and enhanced.

4. Conclusion

After comprehensively examining the issues and pathways for cultivating college students' rule of law thinking in the new era, we recognize that deepening law-based campus governance, optimizing classroom education, relying on practical activities, and fostering a positive family rule of law education environment are key pathways to enhance college students' rule of law thinking. This not only helps achieve the overall goal of advancing the rule of law in the country and promoting law-based campus governance but also contributes to the comprehensive development of college students. Therefore, we must adopt a multi-faceted approach and collectively promote the cultivation of college students' rule of law thinking to lay a solid foundation for the rule of law construction in society.

Acknowledgement

Fund Project: 2023 Education and Teaching Reform Research Project of Southwest Medical University: "Research on the Path of Healthy Legal Talents Training in High-level medical Universities in Western China under the Belt and Road Initiative"(JG2023zd14)

2023 Research project of Social Science Union of Southwest Medical University: "Research on the Construction of Basic Public Health and Basic Medical Service System in Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" (SKLYB14)

Sichuan Medical and Health Rule of Law Research Center - China Health Law Society 2023 Research Project: Research on the Legal Issues of International Medical Cooperation under the China-Asean Health Community (YF23-Y03)

References

- [1] Wang Wanyu, Guo Boyu. Exploring the Integration of Rule of Law Culture into the Construction of Campus Culture in Universities under the Background of the New Era [J]. *Journal of North China Electric Power University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2023, 26(05): 1-8.
- [2] Cui Nan, Duan Yueli. The contemporary value of cultivating the legal literacy of college students in the new era [J]. *Journal of Changchun University of Engineering (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2023, 24 (04): 7-11.
- [3] Xu Xiye. Education on the cultivation of ecological rule of law among college students in the new era. *Journal of Tianjin Vocational University*, 2023, 32 (04): 86-90.
- [4] Zhang Zhiyu. Research on Cultivating the Legal Concept of College Students in the New Era [J]. *Journal of Qiqihar University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2023, (06): 131-133+138.