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Research Article

College Students' Legal Awareness Cultivation and Education Based on the Characteristics of the New Era

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Abstract

Under the Chinese education system, college students had little contact with the law in the high school stage, and non-law majors have insufficient legal awareness. This paper, based on the status quo of contemporary college students' legal consciousness, analyzed the various problems in the legal awareness cultivation of college students in the new era, and put forward the teaching ideas and specific measures for college students' legal education as required in the new era of socialism.

Keywords

New Era of Socialism • Legal Awareness • Legal System Education • Teaching Ideas

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The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Yang & Yang, 2018) made an important conclusion that China entered a new era of socialism. One of the important characteristics of the new era is the rule of law under the leadership of the Communist Party. Since the 18th National Congress, on the basis of the legal system implementation, the party has systematically summed up the strategy of governing the country by law, contributing to increasingly complete ideas and theories of the legal system. Since 2004, the State Council has successively proposed a clear timetable for the establishment of a legal government, namely the completion of the legal government and the well-off society in an all-round way by 2020 and the completion of a country, government, and society under the rule of law by 2035 (Turner, 2000). In colleges and universities, the cultivation of college students' legal awareness should respond to the call of the new era and guide the students to meet the era's requirements so that students can take the rule of law as one of their ideological weapons. Therefore, it is required that colleges and universities, based on China's national conditions, strengthen legal education and educate students comprehensively to cultivate qualified builders for the new era of socialism.

Legal awareness (Sarat, 1989), an integral part of social consciousness, is a collective term for people's thoughts, opinions, theories, and psychology. Under the Chinese education system, most adults systematically study law in the university. Therefore, the legal awareness and legal literacy of college students are closely related to the realization of China's legal goals. At present, the legal awareness and legal knowledge of college students generally show a stable and healthy condition (Sun, 2018). Most students can abide by the law, regard the law as the code of conduct, and protect themselves with the law. However, due to the complexity of society, especially the dramatic changes in the economic conditions and lives of the public after the reform and opening up, many college students have not developed the awareness of conscious pursuit of the spirit of law with insufficient understanding of the core values of socialism (Du, 2013). In recent years, the probability of college students breaking the law in some areas has increased. In 2015, Beijing University of Information Science and Technology conducted a survey on the status quo of college students' legal awareness. A questionnaire was designed to collect the legal obedience, legal psychology and legal knowledge of college students. Statistical analysis of the questionnaires showed that many college students, despite certain legal knowledge, showed insufficient trust for the law and didn't realize to solve social problems by using legal knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the legal system education of college students and improve their legal awareness and application abilities.

Status Quo of Contemporary College Students' Legal Consciousness

The impact of historical reasons

In the agricultural and feudal society of ancient China, the law serves the ruling class. After the Confucianism and Taoism gradually became the dominant thoughts, the feudal ruling class took morality as the first standard to maintain social relations and the legal system as the second. However, the right to interpret and execute laws is completely determined by the rulers, which has led to the continuous failure in the establishment of the legal system in ancient China and comprised law authority.

The impact of educational system on legal system learning

There are few legal basics courses in the curriculum of high schools in China, leading to few accesses to legal knowledge for high school students. Even if some schools offer legal courses, due to the pressure of pursuing higher education, students and schools will focus on the subjects in the college entrance examination, and other subjects excluded from the college entrance examination will have to give way. Therefore, students have limited access to the law in high school (Wang, 2008).

Colleges and universities set up legal courses and regard the mastery of legal knowledge as the basic quality of college students. At the same time, on the premise of basic legal knowledge acquisition, they also provided major-related legal courses to enable college students to more systematically learn legal knowledge and lay the foundation for future work. With the establishment of law courses in colleges and universities, the legal awareness of college students has been significantly enhanced, but the awareness and means of college students consciously pursuing higher legal level need to be improved. Xinhua News Agency once reported that some scholars conducted a questionnaire survey on non-law majors of 10 universities in Shanghai and Beijing in 2005 and 2015 respectively. The questionnaire was designed to survey students' understanding of 20 laws such as the Marriage Law, the Labor Contract Law, and the Criminal Law. The college students surveyed only knew about 25%-30% of the laws, and few of them knew about all.

Main problems in college students' legal awareness

The legal study by contemporary college students has the following problems.

Lack of initiative and integrity in legal learning the law is a complex and systematic discipline. In the learning process, college students are often only interested in major courses or the major-related practical legal courses. For instance, in the teaching practice, the Labor Contract Law is more popular with students, while the Criminal Law and the Constitution are generally ignored (Zhang, 2010). In addition, many students fail to realize the importance of the law to their future social life, but hold a “whatever” mentality, which also leads to the lack of legal knowledge, let alone the rule of law consciousness (Yang, 2015).

Lack of faith in the law Believing in the law, relying on the law, and using the law are the ultimate goals of college students to learn the law. When they and others need legal protection, contemporary college students should be able to come forward and use the law to protect the legitimate rights of citizens and also recognize and trust the law. However, due to the influence of some judicial corruption and public opinion noise in the society, college students are skeptical about the sacred role of the law without a firm belief in the law, and some individuals even demonstrate resistance to the legal system establishment.

Weak ability to use the law Rational use of the law to protect the legitimate rights and interests of themselves and others is the core purpose of college students to study the law, but currently students have shown certain problems in law abiding, understanding and utilizing, such as frequent fighting among college students. Some cannot calm down in disputes and finally break the law, and some endure cheating in part-time work while don't realize self-protection by the law. With the further development of the Internet, the usury loan

disguised as the campus loan has gradually penetrated into the campus, causing various social events such as college students being forced to take nude photos by the loaner and jumping off the building. In the first half of 2018, over 200 nude loan events were founded in universities in one district of Henan. These all manifest the lack of legal awareness and knowledge and non-compliance of college students (Zhao & Li, 2018).

A questionnaire survey on the legal awareness of 1105 college students in Wuhan was conducted to collect their legal awareness, legal literacy, and legal application conditions. The results of the survey were analyzed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Survey on College Students' Legal Awareness in Wuhan

	Headcounts	Percentage
Not clear	69	11.7
Not transparent	389	65.7
Relatively transparent	125	21.8
Very transparent	49	5.8
Total	592	100%

Measures for Improvement of College Students' Legal Awareness

Based on the above analysis, the ways to improve the legal awareness of college students were proposed as follows:

Promote a sound rule-of-law environment and enhance legal authority

The rule-of-law social environment can subtly influence college students' understanding of the law. Although the rule of law nowadays is much better than before, the current social conditions are not conducive to the cultivation of legal consciousness of college students. First of all, China has long suffered "the rule by man", depriving people of the awareness of using the law to pursue equality and justice and safeguard their own rights and interests. The negative impact of this traditional culture makes students doubt or even resist the authority of the law when they should have utilized the law to protect themselves. Secondly, some judicial corruptions do exist in the society, and some often bend the law for personal gains. In this context, college students may lack confidence in the judiciary and think that right equals the law which can be controlled by money. Therefore, the comprehensive promotion of governing the country by law and improve the legal environment will effectively establish correct legal concepts and models for college students and enhance their belief in and pursuit of law.

Optimize the legal curriculum

As the main body of education, the curriculum design committee of colleges and universities should take responsibility for the scientific formulation and promotion of specific measures for college students' legal education, pay more attention to the legal education in colleges and universities, strengthen the curriculum setting, and optimize the training mode of legal talents. For example, the law course for freshmen is mainly

"Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Basis", but this course focuses less on the legal education while more on the ideological education, for which students cannot learn legal knowledge in this course.

The optimization measures to create a professional and integrated curriculum system are detailed as follows.

Firstly, increase elective courses for basic legal knowledge. On the basis of the original major-related courses, elective law courses can be appropriately set up for the lower grades to enhance students' basic legal knowledge, including the Constitution, the Basic Theory of Law, the Criminal Law, the Civil Law, the Commercial Law, the Competition Law, and the Litigation Law. These basic elective courses allow students to understand the basic theories of jurisprudence and lay the foundation for the subsequent courses combining their major and laws. At the same time, this module with high practicality can meet the further study needs of students who are interested in law, especially business students.

Secondly, retain the required course of major-related laws for the liberal arts students. In the lower grades, the course of "Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Basis" have laid the foundation for students to gain deeper legal knowledge. In the major-related knowledge learning stage, the corresponding legal courses should be arranged for the upper grades. In the course teaching, students should be guided to upgrade their awareness from the basic legal knowledge learning to legal knowledge enhancement by major-related laws and to prepare for further cultivation of legal awareness and ability.

Increase case teaching and implement comprehensive teaching

The inherent limitations of traditional teaching methods restrict the implementation of the practical and critical principles of legal subject teaching, which is extremely unfavorable for the cultivation of practical talents. The application of case teaching method is a useful exploration (Bai, 2018). The mainstream case teaching method mainly has the following processes. 1) Build a discussion group before class, and each group draws conclusions based on discussion and analysis. This is only the opinion and conclusion of the group, while other groups may hold another point of view and conclusion. 2) The group representative reads out the analysis report, which should be formulated based on their opinions and conclusions in the pre-class preparation. In order to enable other students to clearly understand the analysis report, the report is required to be clear-cut, well-argued, logical, and the presenter must have clear and smooth utterance. Despite short time, it provides students with a good presenting opportunity.

In the selection mechanism of teaching materials, different colleges can choose the designated textbooks or general textbooks according to their own needs, and encourage the school to formulate textbooks together with the teachers of law department according to the characteristics and major conditions of the students. In the teaching, a variety of teaching methods should be adopted to mobilize the initiative of students through hot events, video viewing and on-site restoration. Teachers should combine case analysis teaching with problem-oriented teaching. Also, teachers should design and arrange the pre-class preparation tasks for students, and initiate various interactions in class, such as case discussions, difficult problem research, in-class exercises, and knowledge contests. In this teaching mode, the role of teachers is not only to help students sort out knowledge, but also to test the effect of learning. More importantly, teachers should guide students to analyze and

understand the content of the course in terms of the intersection of business management and law. It will help to make up for the poor practicability in traditional class teaching, and actively guide students to participate in campus-level legal activities and walk out of the ivory tower.

Improve the teaching team level and increase the teaching-research integration

Part of the college's professional teachers are required to have an interdisciplinary complex legal knowledge structure. For example, the business school should enrich the legal knowledge and professionalism of business teachers. On the basis of improving their professional quality, teachers need to constantly supplement the knowledge of various legal fields related to this major. In addition, teachers of the law department should be invited to assist the training and jointly complete the legal teaching courses. This teaching cooperation should be upgraded to mutual exchanges on scientific research. Teachers can carry out interdisciplinary scientific research cooperation and gradually build a composite legal teaching and research team with major knowledge combined. Students with abundant resources can even introduce corporate instructors and law firms' professional lawyers as supplementary teachers to build a well-structured and experienced double-skilled teaching team. At the same time, teachers are encouraged to participate in all aspects of business operations and legal practice during holidays. In this process, they can timely research and discuss the frontier issues involving the integration of law and business in the daily corporate operations and make recommendations for enterprise management. It will help companies to calmly cope with the legal risks in development and collect first-hand legal information for class teaching with law and business integrated to gradually improve the professionalism of teachers in legal practice.

Conclusion

It is an inevitable requirement to shape and cultivate the legal consciousness of college students and build a perfect ideological and political education system for the establishment of a socialist country ruled by law and strengthening of the ideological and political education of college students. In this paper, based on analysis of the status quo of the legal consciousness of college students in the new era of socialism after the 19th National Congress, the cultivation methods and optimization plans for the legal awareness improvement of college students in terms of the legal curriculum and legal knowledge structure of college students.

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