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Integrating Rule-of-Law Education into Ideological and Political Courses in Primary and Secondary Schools: Practical Difficulties and Optimization Pathways

Aihua Zeng[1]

Hunan Institute of Information Technology, Changsha, Hunan, China

Abstract

Rule-of-law education is a core component of ideological and political education in primary and secondary schools. It is the key vehicle for cultivating young people's legal awareness, rule-based thinking and legal literacy, and a foundational project for advancing law-based governance and building a socialist country under the rule of law. As the principal arena in which schools carry out the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, ideological and political courses bear the functions of legal enlightenment, value guidance and behavioural regulation. Rule-of-law education in China's primary and secondary schools is currently delivered through the Morality and Rule of Law curriculum, and a regularised, systematised framework has gradually taken shape. In practice, however, its integration with ideological and political courses still faces real difficulties: deviations in how its purpose is understood, fragmented teaching content, insufficient professional capacity among teachers, monolithic teaching models, and the absence of a coordinated home-school-society mechanism. Rule-of-law education consequently remains largely a formality, struggling to be internalised in the mind and externalised in conduct. Grounded in the realities of classroom teaching, this paper examines the contemporary value of integrating rule-of-law education into the ideological and political classroom, analyses the salient problems in the current integration process and their causes, and proposes targeted optimization pathways that are scientific, regularised and life-oriented. It aims to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for raising the quality of rule-of-law education in ideological and political courses and for cultivating young people who are law-abiding and virtuous.

Keywords: primary and secondary schools; ideological and political courses; rule-of-law education; educational integration; pathways for student development

1 Introduction

Comprehensively advancing law-based governance is a fundamental strategy of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and cultivating the legal literacy of young people is the cornerstone of building a law-based China. The primary and secondary school years are the critical period during which individuals form their worldview, outlook on life and values, and equally the golden stage for nurturing rule-of-law awareness and a sense of rules. Doing this work well bears directly on the overall improvement of legal literacy across the population, on social harmony and stability, and on the enduring order and security of the nation. The 2022 edition of the

[1] Corresponding author: 478428685@qq.com

Compulsory Education Curriculum Standard for Morality and Rule of Law explicitly incorporates rule-of-law education into the core teaching system [1]. It takes as its central objective the cultivation of students' rule-of-law concepts, rule-of-law thinking and law-abiding behavioural habits, and promotes the comprehensive integration of legal knowledge, the spirit of the rule of law and faith in the rule of law into the ideological and political classroom.

Ideological and political courses and rule-of-law education possess a high degree of intrinsic compatibility. The former emphasises ideological and moral guidance, the latter the constraints of rules and institutions; the two complement one another in a dialectical unity and together constitute the core content of fostering virtue through education in primary and secondary schools. Morality supplies the ideological foundation for building the rule of law, while the rule of law supplies the institutional safeguards for moral practice. Integrating rule-of-law education deeply into ideological and political courses therefore achieves an organic fusion of governance by virtue and education in the rule of law, helping students establish from an early age the values of upholding virtue, pursuing goodness, and respecting and abiding by the law.

In recent years, primary and secondary schools across the country have actively pursued reform in rule-of-law teaching within ideological and political courses, steadily improving curriculum provision and enriching teaching content, and the reach of rule-of-law education has expanded markedly. Judged by actual teaching effectiveness, however, its integration into ideological and political courses remains at a shallow stage, characterised by the widespread problems of privileging form over substance, theory over practice, and indoctrination over genuine cultivation. Fragmented teaching content, ossified teaching methods, a shortage of specialist teachers and a disjointed educational system all mean that rule-of-law education struggles to reach students' hearts and cannot be effectively translated into conscious behaviour. On this basis, investigating in depth the practical difficulties of integrating rule-of-law education into ideological and political courses in primary and secondary schools, analysing the roots of these problems and exploring pathways for optimization carries significant practical and contemporary value for raising the quality of ideological and political education and for consolidating the human foundation on which a law-based China is to be built.

2 The Contemporary Value of Integrating Rule-of-Law Education into Ideological and Political Courses

2.1 A Core Requirement for Implementing the Fundamental Task of Fostering Virtue Through Education

Fostering virtue through education is the fundamental task of primary and secondary schooling, and ideological and political courses are the key courses through which that task is carried out. In the new era, fostering virtue requires not only that students be cultivated in sound moral character and correct values, but also that they develop a sense of rules, rule-of-law concepts and social responsibility. Rule-of-law education focuses on behavioural norms, rights and obligations, and the spirit of the law, and can thus remedy the shortcoming of traditional ideological and political education, which has emphasised moral suasion at the expense of institutional constraint, achieving a two-way reinforcement between moral instruction and legal regulation. Integrating rule-of-law education deeply into the ideological and political classroom guides students to distinguish right from wrong, observe rules, and understand rights and responsibilities. It helps them discard the pitfalls of subjective and arbitrary thinking and form sound habits of acting in accordance with law and regulation, thereby realising the educational goal of fostering virtue in every dimension.

2.2 A Foundational Project for Advancing the Building of a Law-Based China

Raising the legal literacy of the whole population is the central support for building a law-based China, and rule-of-law education for young people is the starting point and foundation of legal education for all. As the builders and successors of future society, the legal literacy of primary and secondary school students will directly determine the level of legal civilisation that society attains. Compared with rule-of-law education in higher education, which is systematic and specialised, rule-of-law education in primary and secondary schools is introductory, foundational and life-oriented, concentrating on cultivating students' identification with the rule of law and their basic consciousness of obeying the law. Through regularised rule-of-law teaching within ideological and political courses, students encounter legal knowledge from an early age, come to appreciate the spirit of the rule of law, and recognise the authority of law. This consolidates a population-wide faith in the rule of law at its source and lays a solid popular and human foundation for comprehensively advancing law-based governance and constructing a law-governed society.

2.3 A Practical Necessity Suited to the Healthy Development of Young People

The contemporary internet environment is complex and heterogeneous, and legal problems affecting young people occur frequently, including campus bullying, online fraud, infringement of minors' rights and the corrosive influence of harmful information. Primary and secondary school students are not yet mature in mind and judgement, and their capacity to distinguish right from wrong and to protect themselves is comparatively weak, which leaves them vulnerable to misdirection by unhealthy social influences and online content and liable to breach rules and discipline or even the law. Traditional ideological and moral education cannot effectively resolve the concrete legal problems students face. An ideological and political classroom that incorporates rule-of-law education, by contrast, can draw on authentic scenarios from students' school and social lives to convey practical legal knowledge drawn from the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and the Cybersecurity Law. It helps students master methods of self-protection and of defending their rights through legal means, enabling them to avoid developmental risks and safeguarding their physical and mental health.

2.4 An Inevitable Trend in Improving the Ideological and Political Curriculum System

Reform of ideological and political courses in primary and secondary schools continues to deepen in the new era, gradually moving away from a teaching model of purely moral exhortation and towards a diversified educational system that integrates virtue with law and unites knowledge with action. The incorporation of rule-of-law education has greatly enriched the content of ideological and political courses and refined the underlying logic of the curriculum, giving ideological and political education both the warmth of moral guidance and the rigour of legal constraint, and thus achieving an organic unity of flexible instruction and firm regulation. At the same time, rule-of-law education is closely connected to social reality and to students' lives, and can therefore effectively address the problems of hollow content, detachment from reality and insufficient appeal that have long affected traditional ideological and political courses. It enhances the interest, practicality and contemporary relevance of the classroom and drives the continuing refinement of the curriculum system and the sustained improvement of teaching quality.

3 Practical Difficulties in Integrating Rule-of-Law Education into Ideological and Political Courses

3.1 Deviations in Educational Perception and an Ambiguous Sense of Purpose

At present, some primary and secondary schools and teachers hold markedly mistaken views about the integration of rule-of-law education into ideological and political courses, and their sense of its educational purpose is unclear, with the direct consequence that such education becomes a formality. On one hand, some schools privilege examination performance over broader competence, treating ideological and political courses as a minor subject and regarding rule-of-law education as ancillary moral work that does not warrant significant teaching resources; they have not brought rule-of-law education into the regular system of teaching assessment. Most schools mount only occasional lectures or wall-poster campaigns at special moments such as Constitution Day or Rule of Law Publicity Week, while day-to-day classroom teaching of the rule of law is seriously absent, making it difficult to establish any regularised educational mechanism.

On the other hand, some teachers blur the boundary between rule-of-law education and moral education, equating the former simply with discipline or character training. They take the one-sided view that so long as moral instruction is delivered and students' daily conduct is regulated, the task of rule-of-law education has been discharged, thereby neglecting the cultivation of the spirit of the rule of law, legal reasoning and an understanding of rights and obligations. At the same time, a minority of teachers reduce rule-of-law education to the memorisation of legal provisions, placing excessive weight on the mechanical recall of statutory text while neglecting any deeper cultivation of rule-of-law values and faith in the rule of law. Students consequently learn to recite provisions without understanding how to use the law, and their legal literacy cannot be raised in any comprehensive sense. These deviations at the level of perception keep rule-of-law education permanently at the margins of the ideological and political course, making deep integration and effective education difficult to achieve.

3.2 Fragmented Teaching Content with Insufficient Systematicity and Real-Life Relevance

Under the requirements of the new curriculum standard, rule-of-law content in primary and secondary schools is distributed across the Morality and Rule of Law textbooks for each year group according to a graduated design. In actual teaching, however, the problems of fragmentation, discontinuity between stages and detachment from real life are pronounced. First, the knowledge system is fragmented. Rule-of-law knowledge

points are scattered across different units and different stages of schooling without systematic organisation or integration, and the rule-of-law content of the primary and junior secondary stages does not connect coherently, with repetition at the lower stages and gaps at the higher ones. Most teachers work through the textbook chapter by chapter and lesson by lesson without an overall curricular perspective, and are therefore unable to help students construct a systematic framework of legal knowledge. Students' understanding of the rule of law remains scattered and partial, and no complete structure of rule-of-law thinking can form.

Second, teaching content is detached from real life. Rule-of-law teaching in the ideological and political classroom currently consists largely of theoretical concepts and abstract legal provisions. Textbook cases are dated and lag behind events, and there is a shortage of authentic cases that connect with the lives of young people today; newer rule-of-law scenarios such as the handling of campus bullying, the protection of online privacy, infringement involving short-form video, online fraud targeting minors and the throwing of objects from height receive little attention. Because teaching content is disconnected from students' school lives, online lives and social lives, students cannot relate what they learn to real situations or perceive the practical utility of the law, and their enthusiasm and initiative in learning are seriously diminished.

Finally, content is poorly matched to the stage of schooling. Some teachers disregard the developmental patterns and cognitive differences of primary and secondary school students: at the primary stage they explain abstract jurisprudential ideas that exceed students' comprehension, while at the junior secondary stage they remain at the level of basic rule instruction without deepening rule-of-law thinking or the capacity to defend one's rights. Teaching content is thus mismatched with the stage and circumstances of the learners, and educational effectiveness is substantially reduced.

3.3 A Scarcity of Specialist Teachers and Uneven Teaching Capacity

The teaching workforce is the central support for integrating rule-of-law education into ideological and political courses, and the shortage of specialist teachers together with insufficient all-round capacity is currently the most conspicuous weakness in rule-of-law teaching in primary and secondary schools. At present, rule-of-law education is delivered entirely by ideological and political teachers working in a concurrent capacity, with no dedicated rule-of-law teaching posts. The overwhelming majority of these teachers graduated in ideological and political education or in education studies and have never studied law systematically. Their grounding in legal theory is weak and their professional capacity to interpret statutes, follow legal reasoning and analyse legal cases is inadequate.

In the course of teaching, most teachers can do little more than recite the surface content of the textbook. They cannot interpret in any depth the jurisprudential meaning that underlies the rule of law, find it difficult to conduct substantive teaching around authentic cases, and cannot answer students' questions about the law with precision. At the same time, some teachers lack the capacity for innovation in rule-of-law teaching and remain fixed in a traditional didactic model, making no use of diversified methods such as scenario simulation, case discussion or rule-of-law practice. Lessons are dull and monotonous, and student interest is hard to engage.

In addition, schools provide seriously inadequate specialist legal training for ideological and political teachers, and regularised, systematic mechanisms for rule-of-law teaching research are absent, leaving teachers unable to update their legal knowledge or improve their teaching capacity in a timely way. Meanwhile, deputy principals for the rule of law and legal advisers drawn from outside the school serve mostly on a part-time basis and visit to teach very infrequently. They cannot participate regularly in classroom teaching or after-class guidance and therefore cannot compensate for the professional shortfall within the school. The overall standard of the teaching workforce is thus poorly matched to the educational demands of rule-of-law teaching in the new era.

3.4 Rigid, Monolithic Teaching Models and a Serious Absence of Practice-Based Learning

Rule-of-law teaching in ideological and political courses in primary and secondary schools is widely marked by an emphasis on theory at the expense of practice and on transmission at the expense of experience. Teaching models are rigid and monolithic, and the separation of knowing from doing is pronounced. In classroom teaching, most teachers still employ the traditional transmissive model in which the teacher speaks, students listen, key points are marked and knowledge points are memorised. Legal theory is conveyed in one direction, with little interactive teaching through teacher-student exchange, scenario-based experience or case inquiry. Teaching is confined to the textbook and the classroom, monotonous in form and dull in atmosphere, and cannot stimulate students' initiative or spirit of inquiry.

At the same time, practice-based rule-of-law teaching is seriously absent. The central aim of rule-of-law education is to cultivate law-abiding conduct and the ability to use the law, which requires rich practical activity to convert knowledge into action. At present, however, the overwhelming majority of primary and secondary schools lack any regular programme of rule-of-law practice and rarely organise students to take part in court observation, rule-of-law study tours, community legal outreach, mock trials or rule-of-law debating competitions. Students remain for long periods in a position of passively receiving theoretical knowledge, unable to perceive the value of law in

authentic settings or to exercise the ability to apply it. Legal knowledge therefore stays at the level of the textbook and cannot be converted into rule-of-law thinking or conscious conduct, giving rise to the widespread problem of knowing the law without obeying it and understanding the law without using it.

3.5 Absence of a Home-School-Society Mechanism and Insufficient Collective Educational Force

Cultivating legal literacy is a systematic undertaking that requires schools, families and society to act in concert and in the same direction. At present, however, rule-of-law education in primary and secondary schools depends almost entirely on the school as a single agent. Rule-of-law education within the family is absent, social resources for rule-of-law education are poorly utilised, and no genuine home-school-society mechanism has yet been established, leaving the collective educational force seriously inadequate.

At the level of the family, most parents have relatively low legal literacy themselves and lack systematic legal knowledge, while day-to-day family education concentrates on academic results and moral character to the neglect of the rule of law. Some parents hold the view that marks matter more than broader competence and that rule-of-law education is the school's responsibility. They pay little attention in daily life to cultivating their children's sense of rules or law-abiding habits, and in some cases their own conduct breaches rules and discipline, exerting a negative influence on students and weakening the results of the school's rule-of-law education.

At the level of society, high-quality social resources for rule-of-law education have not been effectively matched to the educational needs of primary and secondary schools. The legal-outreach resources and practice venues of courts, procuratorates, judicial bureaux and law firms have not been opened to primary and secondary school students on any regular basis. The online rule-of-law environment is complex, and harmful online information, unlawful short-form video content and cyberbullying erode young people's understanding. At the same time, the number of rule-of-law practice platforms, study bases and outreach activities available to young people in society is insufficient to meet the need for regular practical learning. Schools, families and society operate separately and in isolation from one another, unable to form a comprehensive, multi-dimensional structure for rule-of-law education, which severely constrains the effectiveness of integration.

3.6 An Imperfect Evaluation System and a Skewed Educational Orientation

A sound evaluation system is an important lever for ensuring that rule-of-law education takes effect, yet the evaluation system for ideological and political courses in primary

and secondary schools has evident deficiencies and is poorly suited to the educational requirements of rule-of-law education. On one hand, methods of evaluation are monolithic and rigid. The overwhelming majority of schools use written examination results as the sole criterion, concentrating on students' recall of rule-of-law knowledge points while neglecting any comprehensive assessment of rule-of-law thinking, faith in the rule of law, law-abiding conduct or practical capability. This examination-oriented approach leads teachers to concentrate on transmitting knowledge points and students on mechanical memorisation, to the neglect of any deeper cultivation of legal literacy.

On the other hand, the dimensions of evaluation are incomplete, with no formative assessment, practice-based assessment or regular longitudinal tracking. Schools attend only to the outcomes of classroom teaching and disregard students' everyday conduct, their participation in social practice and changes in their understanding of the rule of law, and are therefore unable to judge accurately how far students' legal literacy has genuinely improved. At the same time, corresponding incentive and accountability mechanisms are lacking: assessment of teachers' rule-of-law teaching quality and of improvements in students' legal literacy is largely a formality. Teachers and students accordingly attach insufficient importance to rule-of-law education, teaching reform and practical learning lack momentum, and no lasting mechanism for rule-of-law education can be established.

4 Optimization Pathways for Integrating Rule-of-Law Education into Ideological and Political Courses

4.1 Transforming Educational Perceptions and Clarifying the Purpose of Integrated Moral and Legal Education

Resolving the problem of shallow integration requires, above all, transforming how teachers, students, families and schools understand the issue and clarifying the core educational purpose of rule-of-law education. First, schools should adopt an educational philosophy that integrates virtue with law and places competence first, abandoning examination-oriented and formalistic thinking. Rule-of-law education should be brought into the core teaching system of ideological and political courses and into the school's overall plan for moral education, integrated organically with moral education, behavioural-norm education and mental-health education, and supported by a regularised, systematic teaching mechanism. Incorporating the quality of rule-of-law teaching into teacher performance appraisal and into the evaluation of the school's educational quality would decisively reverse the present marginalisation and formalisation of rule-of-law education.

Second, training should strengthen teachers' understanding, guiding them to clarify the intrinsic logic connecting ideological and moral education with rule-of-law education and to recognise that rule-of-law education is not the teaching of legal provisions but the all-round cultivation of the spirit of the rule of law, rule-of-law thinking and law-abiding habits. Teachers should be required to attend to both moral guidance and legal constraint in their teaching, nourishing the spirit of the rule of law through morality and reinforcing moral boundaries through law, so as to achieve deep integration of moral and legal education. At the same time, students should be guided towards a correct understanding of the rule of law, recognising that law is both a standard that regulates conduct and a weapon that protects their own rights and interests. This displaces the one-sided view of law as mere constraint and punishment and encourages students to respect, study, obey and use the law of their own accord.

4.2 Optimising Teaching Content and Building a Systematic, Life-Oriented Curriculum

To address fragmented content detached from real life, teaching content must be restructured into a systematic, graduated and life-oriented framework grounded in the requirements of the new curriculum standard, the circumstances of each stage of schooling and the realities of students' lives. First, teaching content should be integrated across stages so that it advances in a spiral. In accordance with the educational objectives of enlightenment at the primary stage and deepening at the junior secondary stage, rule-of-law knowledge points for each year group should be organised so as to break down the barriers between textbook chapters and build a coherent and ordered body of knowledge. The primary stage should concentrate on cultivating a sense of rules and basic legal common sense through life-oriented and engaging content, while the junior secondary stage should concentrate on rights and obligations, legal responsibility and the capacity to defend one's rights, deepening rule-of-law thinking and faith in the rule of law. This avoids repetition and discontinuity between stages and achieves graduated, progressive development.

Second, teaching materials should be updated to match the realities of students' lives. Drawing on school life, online life and topical social issues, teachers should improve their stock of teaching cases, bringing into the classroom life-oriented rule-of-law scenarios such as campus bullying, online fraud, privacy protection, the defence of minors' rights, objects thrown from height, traffic safety and fire safety. Dated cases remote from the present should be discarded in favour of authentic, vivid and age-appropriate examples, so that legal knowledge moves beyond the textbook and closer to life, strengthening both the practical value and the persuasive force of teaching.

Third, teaching should be differentiated according to the circumstances of the learners. Taking full account of the cognitive characteristics of students at different stages, the primary stage should rely mainly on stories, games and scenario-based experience in order to reduce the difficulty of learning, while the junior secondary stage should rely mainly on case discussion, jurisprudential analysis and practical inquiry in order to deepen thinking, ensuring that teaching content matches students' developmental needs.

4.3 Strengthening the Teaching Workforce and Building a Professional Teaching Team

A professionalised teaching workforce is the central guarantee of improved quality in rule-of-law teaching within ideological and political courses, and the workforce should be strengthened comprehensively along three dimensions: training, teaching research and external support. First, a regularised mechanism for teacher training should be established. Schools, working with education authorities and judicial departments, should organise regular specialist training for ideological and political teachers in legal knowledge, rule-of-law teaching methods and case-analysis skills, concentrating on professional legal knowledge relevant to primary and secondary education, such as the protection of minors, civil disputes and the law governing the internet, so as to remedy teachers' professional shortcomings. Teachers should be encouraged to take part in rule-of-law teaching-research activities, online courses and academic exchange in order to keep their legal knowledge current and raise their professional teaching capacity.

Second, the school's internal teaching-research system should be improved. A teaching-research group for rule-of-law education within ideological and political courses should be formed to conduct regular collective lesson preparation, open lessons, teaching seminars and case-sharing sessions, pooling teaching resources, exchanging experience and resolving teaching difficulties so that teachers raise their rule-of-law teaching standards together. Teachers should be encouraged to undertake research projects grounded in their own teaching practice and to explore models of integrated moral and legal instruction suited to primary and secondary schools, so that research advances teaching and teaching advances student development.

Finally, a mechanism for external teaching support should be established. Making full use of the professional expertise of deputy principals for the rule of law, legal advisers and judicial officers, schools should draw up regular plans for visiting instruction and hold thematic rule-of-law lectures, case analyses and co-teaching sessions to compensate for the professional shortfall in the school's own workforce. A dual-teacher model combining in-school ideological and political teachers with external rule-of-law

specialists would allow professional resources to complement one another and would raise the expertise and effectiveness of rule-of-law teaching across the board.

4.4 Innovating Teaching Models and Strengthening Practice-Based Learning

Breaking with the traditional transmissive model requires building a diversified teaching system that combines classroom interaction with practical experience, thereby uniting knowledge and action. In classroom teaching, methods should be renewed and the single lecture format abandoned in favour of the wide use of interactive approaches such as case-based teaching, scenario simulation, group discussion, video-based instruction and problem-based inquiry. Problem situations built around representative rule-of-law cases can guide students to think, analyse and discuss on their own initiative and to explore legal rules and the spirit of the rule of law for themselves, mobilising their initiative in learning and rendering otherwise dry legal theory vivid and accessible.

In practical teaching, a regular system of rule-of-law practice should be built so that rule-of-law education moves out of the classroom and into action. Schools should regularly organise campus activities such as mock trials, rule-of-law debating competitions, rule-of-law wall newspapers, rule-of-law playlets and legal-outreach speech contests, allowing students to deepen their understanding through immersive experience. At the same time, schools should actively draw on social resources including courts, procuratorates, judicial bureaux and rule-of-law education bases for young people, organising students for court observation, rule-of-law study tours and voluntary community legal-outreach work. Entering authentic rule-of-law settings allows students to perceive the authority of law directly and to master the means of defending their rights and conducting themselves in accordance with law, genuinely achieving the application of learning and the unity of knowledge and action.

4.5 Building a Home-School-Society Mechanism to Pool Collective Educational Strength

Working from a comprehensive conception of education, a tripartite rule-of-law education system should be established in which the school leads, the family contributes and society provides support, thereby overcoming the limitations of a single educational agent. The school should fulfil its role as the principal arena, conducting rule-of-law classroom teaching on a regular basis and building a rule-of-law culture on campus. Through school broadcasts, notice boards, themed class meetings and rule-of-law activities, it should create a strong atmosphere of legality on campus that cultivates students' legal literacy imperceptibly.

Rule-of-law education in the family should be strengthened. Through parents' meetings, home-school groups, lectures on family education and the dissemination of accessible legal material, parents should be given knowledge of the law as it affects young people together with methods of family education, and guided to raise their own legal literacy and to take rule-of-law education seriously. Parents should be encouraged to regulate their own words and conduct in daily life, to attend to cultivating their children's sense of rules and law-abiding habits, and to correct undesirable behaviour promptly, so that family culture nurtures legal literacy and the family becomes a first line of rule-of-law education.

Social resources for rule-of-law education should be activated. Rule-of-law venues and public resources in society should be opened to primary and secondary school students, with public-interest legal outreach and rule-of-law study activities conducted on a regular basis. The online rule-of-law environment should be cleaned up and harmful online information addressed, so as to create a healthy online environment for young people. Full use should be made of occasions such as Constitution Day, Rule of Law Publicity Week and Safety Education Day to conduct legal-outreach activities for the whole population and foster a social atmosphere of respecting and obeying the law, so that young people absorb the influence of the rule of law imperceptibly and the collective educational strength of home, school and society is brought together.

4.6 Improving the Evaluation System and Building a Diversified Assessment Mechanism

Working from the goal of cultivating genuine competence, the evaluation system for rule-of-law education should be reconstructed on a sound scientific basis, discarding the defects of examination-oriented assessment and establishing a comprehensive, diversified orientation. First, the content of evaluation should be broadened. Departing from a model that assesses knowledge alone, evaluation should encompass students' grasp of legal knowledge, their understanding and rule-of-law thinking, their everyday law-abiding conduct, their performance in social practice and their commitment to rule-of-law values, achieving all-round assessment of knowledge, ability, competence and behaviour.

Second, methods of evaluation should be improved through a diversified system combining formative with summative assessment and quantitative with qualitative judgement. Regular formative assessment should draw on classroom performance, completion of assignments, participation in activities and behavioural habits, while end-of-term summative assessment should combine written examination, practical assessment and appraisal of overall competence, so as to reflect students' legal literacy comprehensively and objectively.

Third, mechanisms for evaluating teachers should be strengthened. Innovation in rule-of-law teaching, teaching-research outputs, the conduct of practical activities and improvements in students' competence should all be incorporated into teachers' overall appraisal, supported by corresponding incentives. This would fully mobilise teachers' enthusiasm and initiative in reforming rule-of-law teaching within ideological and political courses, and a sound evaluation system would ensure that rule-of-law education is delivered regularly and to a high standard.

5 Conclusion

Integrating rule-of-law education into ideological and political courses in primary and secondary schools is an inevitable trend in the reform of ideological and political education in the new era, and a foundational project for cultivating the legal literacy of young people and advancing the building of a law-based China. At present, rule-of-law education within ideological and political courses in China's primary and secondary schools still faces numerous practical difficulties in its sense of purpose, teaching content, teaching workforce, teaching models, collaborative mechanisms and evaluation systems, and the problems of shallow integration, the separation of knowing from doing, and limited effectiveness urgently require resolution.

Ideological and political education in primary and secondary schools in the new era must hold fast to the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Grounded in the developmental patterns of students and the realities of teaching practice, and through the multiple pathways of transforming educational perceptions, optimising curriculum content, strengthening the teaching workforce, innovating teaching models, building collaborative mechanisms and improving evaluation systems, the integration of rule-of-law education with ideological and political courses should be advanced from shallow combination to deep mutual reinforcement. This would genuinely realise the aim of securing foundations through the rule of law and nourishing hearts and minds through morality, guiding young people to establish from an early age the values of revering the law, respecting rules and upholding virtue, and cultivating a generation of well-rounded young people in the new era who possess both moral and legal literacy, thereby consolidating the human foundation for building a law-based China.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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