

# Reimagining Legal Education in the Age of AI: A Multidimensional Framework from the Chinese Context

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**Abstract:** Generative AI, represented by tools such as ChatGPT, is reshaping the production, dissemination, and application of legal knowledge. This shift challenges legal education systems that rely on textual interpretation, case analysis, and normative reasoning, while also creating new opportunities for reform. Against the backdrop of China's strategies for advancing the rule of law, digitalization, and educational modernization, this study develops a three-dimensional analytical framework linking national strategy, technological logic, and educational mechanisms. Drawing on policy documents, representative teaching reforms, and institutional practices, the paper identifies a transition from knowledge transmission to value-oriented, technology-integrated, and interdisciplinary legal training. It further proposes a multidimensional Legal Education Quality Effectiveness framework and a preliminary evaluation instrument for future empirical testing. Comparative observations on Chinese and international law schools, together with a governance-oriented reform path, indicate that effective AI integration requires coordinated change in curriculum, practice, faculty development, and institutional support. The study argues that AI can become a sustainable driver of legal modernization and educational equity when aligned with strategic guidance and sound governance.

**Keywords:** Legal Education, Artificial Intelligence, Educational Reform, Governance, Legal Ethics

## 1. Introduction

In the 2020s, generative artificial intelligence (AI), represented by tools such as ChatGPT, has rapidly changed the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge. This shift poses major challenges to legal education, which traditionally depends on language, norms, and reasoning<sup>[1]</sup>. As AI enters legal information retrieval, document drafting, and legal reasoning, law schools must strengthen students' technical adaptability and critical thinking<sup>[2, 3]</sup>. At the same time, China is advancing the "Rule of Law in China," "Digital China," and "Education Power" strategies, making the cultivation of high-quality legal professionals a national priority<sup>[4]</sup>. Policy documents have provided a reform blueprint for Chinese legal education<sup>[5]</sup>. Yet the current system still faces lagging curricula, narrow training goals, and insufficient practical teaching<sup>[6-8]</sup>. Existing studies discuss AI's impact on legal education, digital teaching, and ethical risks, but an integrated framework linking strategy, technology, and educational mechanisms remains underdeveloped<sup>[9-12]</sup>.

In response to the strategic imperative of training new-generation legal professionals, this paper proposes a three-dimensional framework of "national strategy–technological logic–educational mechanism." It aims to explore paradigm-level transformations in Chinese legal education within the context of AI integration, with a focus on value shaping, technological incorporation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and institutional support. The framework aspires to contribute practical insights toward the modernization of China's legal education governance system and institutional capacity.

## 2. National Strategic Logic: The New Institutional Mission of Legal Education

Against the backdrop of profound shifts in global political structures, ongoing scientific and technological revolutions, and the modernization of China's national governance system, the role of legal education has been significantly elevated<sup>[4]</sup>. Legal education is no longer merely an academic discipline; it has become an institutional cornerstone supporting the construction of a rule-of-law society, the implementation of the strategy of law-based governance, and the development of a digital China<sup>[13]</sup>. The

comprehensive promotion of the “Rule of Law in China” strategy has placed legal professionals at the heart of social governance. At the same time, the wave of artificial intelligence and digital transformation requires legal talent to be more interdisciplinary and adaptable<sup>[12]</sup>.

### ***2.1 Strategic Top-Level Design as Systemic Guidance***

The Opinions on Strengthening Legal Education and Legal Theory Research in the New Era, issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in 2023, emphasized the need to position legal education within the broader context of serving China’s modernization and high-level openness to the world. This top-level institutional design not only clarified the direction for cultivating legal talent in the new era but also outlined comprehensive paths for the simultaneous reform of curriculum, faculty development, practical training, and evaluation systems<sup>[5]</sup>.

Moreover, the Education Power Construction Plan (2023–2035) reiterated the importance of advancing education modernization in service of China’s broader modernization efforts, with “educational digitalization” defined as a key driver of change in the higher education system<sup>[7]</sup>. Within this framework, legal education is tasked with cultivating compound, innovative, and globally competent legal professionals<sup>[10]</sup>. Students are expected not only to master core legal knowledge but also to acquire capabilities in emerging technologies such as AI, big data, and blockchain, in response to new national strategic needs<sup>[12]</sup>.

### ***2.2 Transformation of Legal Talent’s Competency Structure***

In the face of institutional reform and digital transformation, training legal professionals in the new era must go beyond rote memorization of statutes and mechanical case summarization. It requires the development of a multifaceted skill set encompassing political literacy, international vision, technological competence, and professional ethics<sup>[14]</sup>. For example, legal professionals engaged in international practice must be proficient in international rule coordination and multilingual communication, while those focusing on digital governance need to understand smart contracts and legal big data analysis<sup>[15]</sup>.

Scholars have emphasized that the cultivation of such composite legal talent demands more than classroom reform. It requires institutional support such as practice bases, legal clinics, and enterprise internship<sup>[8]</sup>. This kind of integrated training system must be realized through curriculum embedding, incentive mechanisms, and industry–education integration, in order to dismantle the closed model of legal knowledge delivery and embed legal education more deeply into national and social governance structures.

### ***2.3 Supply-Side Structural Reform and the Pressure of Adaptation***

Despite clear national strategies, legal education systems in many Chinese universities still suffer from “insufficient supply.” Faculty members often lack the technical expertise necessary for AI-integrated legal instruction, interdisciplinary courses are limited, resource allocation remains uneven, and practical training is frequently marginalized<sup>[10, 16]</sup>. Given the expanding role of AI in legal services, failure to reform the supply side risks creating a fundamental mismatch between legal education and the evolving legal labor market<sup>[12]</sup>. To address this, the government is employing a dual approach: on one hand, it is using policy tools, fiscal investment, and revised evaluation mechanisms to pressure universities to pursue structural reform; on the other, it is leveraging digital platforms and intelligent tools to promote more equitable access to educational resources. High-quality courses, textbooks, and case databases are being made accessible across regions and institutions<sup>[17]</sup>. This represents a coordinated strategy involving both institutional pressure and market responsiveness, aimed at dismantling the discipline-centered and siloed education model and moving toward a more diverse, integrated, and innovation-driven system<sup>[18]</sup>.

In summary, artificial intelligence is reshaping the structural foundations of China’s legal education system through strategic direction, technological transformation, and educational mechanism innovation. To visualize this comprehensive framework more clearly, this study introduces Figure 1, which illustrates a three-layered framework for understanding how generative AI can transform legal education in China. AI tools serve as the input layer, interacting with teaching mechanisms—including curriculum design, practical training, faculty development, and pedagogical methods—as the core site of educational transformation. The output layer represents the cultivation of future-oriented legal competencies. The

entire process is supported by national policy guidance and institutional infrastructure, creating a closed-loop system for sustainable reform.

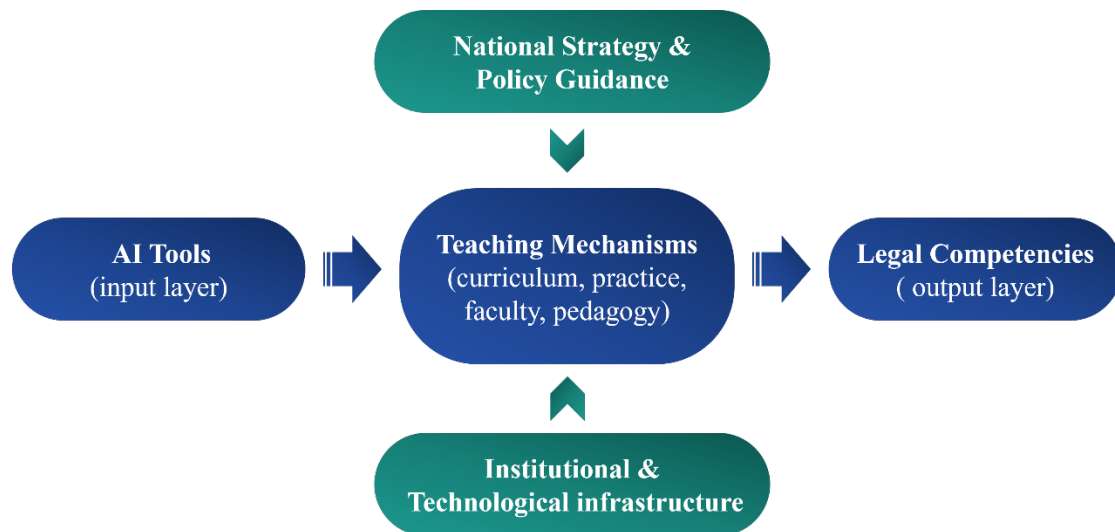


Figure 1. A Systemic Framework for AI-Driven Legal Education Reform.

### 3. Technological Logic: The Impact and Restructuring of Legal Education under Generative AI

Amid the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI), legal education faces unprecedented structural disruption. Generative AI technologies—such as large language models (LLMs), intelligent Q&A systems, and automated legal text generators—are gradually transforming not only legal services but also the underlying structures of legal knowledge<sup>[3]</sup>. These tools can swiftly produce legal documents, perform automated case analysis, and even conduct preliminary legal compliance reviews<sup>[9]</sup>. As a result, the traditional legal education system—relying heavily on human reasoning and case-based teaching—is being fundamentally challenged<sup>[18]</sup>.

#### 3.1 Disruption to Content Adaptability in Legal Education

Generative AI is reshaping how legal knowledge is produced and transmitted. Previously, instructors primarily relied on statute interpretation, case analysis, and role-playing to deliver knowledge in class<sup>[8]</sup>. With AI, however, students can instantly access vast quantities of legal explanations and reasoning through intelligent retrieval systems, weakening the instructor’s monopoly on knowledge delivery. At the same time, AI’s capabilities in drafting legal documents and structuring evidence require students to cultivate stronger critical thinking and modeling abilities<sup>[10]</sup>.

Moreover, as AI tools become embedded in judicial procedures, law students must understand the basic principles behind legal-AI systems and learn to collaborate with intelligent technologies. Without these competencies, they risk marginalization in future legal professions due to insufficient AI literacy<sup>[19]</sup>.

#### 3.2 Transformation of Legal Education’s Teaching Models

Generative AI has redefined both the role of teachers and the expected abilities of students. Teachers must shift from being one-way knowledge transmitters to facilitators of “human–machine co-teaching,” integrating AI skills training, ethical discussions, and interdisciplinary case analysis into the curriculum<sup>[7]</sup>. For instance, in moot court exercises or legal clinic courses, AI-powered drafting tools can be used to teach students how to co-write indictments or legal opinions with AI, enhancing practical proficiency<sup>[16]</sup>. Students, in turn, must go beyond mastering legal texts and reasoning skills to understand data processing, algorithmic logic, and information security risks<sup>[20]</sup>. Given that large language models may hallucinate, legal education must incorporate AI literacy into professional ethics training—developing a triadic competency framework of “law + technology + ethics”<sup>[11]</sup>.

*Table 1. Comparative Table of AI Application in Chinese and International Legal Education.*

Dimension	Chinese Law Schools	International Law Schools
AI-related Course Offerings	Limited and mostly elective; uneven distribution	Structured courses with mandatory AI modules
Practical Training Integration	Emerging but often marginal	Systematically embedded (e.g., moot courts with AI tools)
Faculty Technical Background	Few with AI or tech expertise	Strong AI-legal interdisciplinary faculty presence
Teaching Model	Traditional lecture-based, case-focused	Interactive, problem-based learning with AI tools
Cross-disciplinary Programs	Few; mostly in pilot stages	Widely available (e.g., Law+Tech dual degrees)

To further assess the differences between Chinese and international legal education in AI integration, this study offers a comparative table (Table 1) examining AI course offerings, practical components, faculty structures, and teaching methods across domestic and foreign universities.

### ***3.3 Rebalancing the Value System of Legal Education***

Beyond content and skills, AI also challenges the value foundations of legal education<sup>[20]</sup>. The legal profession fundamentally depends on ethical self-discipline and a sense of social responsibility. While generative AI enhances efficiency, it may erode training in human judgment and public reasoning. For instance, when AI mass-produces legal opinions or contract templates, students may become overly reliant on automation and lose sensitivity to the interpretive subtleties of legal norms—ultimately weakening the ethical fabric of legal professionalism<sup>[18]</sup>.

Therefore, legal education must reinforce value formation, especially in ethical judgment and social responsibility. Courses should include real-world AI ethics case studies—such as algorithmic discrimination, data breaches, and unjust automated decisions—to foster balanced thinking in the face of technological and normative tensions.

### ***3.4 New Demands for AI Literacy and Interdisciplinary Competence***

The adoption of generative AI has significantly broadened the skill requirements for future legal professionals. At a minimum, they must grasp data structures, algorithmic logic, and legal regulations concerning AI governance, while also collaborating with computer scientists, data analysts, and AI ethics experts<sup>[3]</sup>. This interdisciplinary capacity is essential in an era where AI is increasingly embedded in legal practice. Some international universities have already launched “law + AI” dual-degree programs<sup>[2]</sup>, and a number of Chinese institutions are exploring legal-AI labs and including AI literacy in graduation criteria<sup>[20]</sup>. Moving forward, China should promote deeper integration between academia and industry through project-based and problem-oriented education models to foster cross-disciplinary competencies in law students<sup>[4]</sup>.

## **4. A Conceptual Framework of Legal Education Quality Effectiveness**

To further explain how artificial intelligence may reshape legal education, this study proposes a multidimensional framework of Legal Education Quality Effectiveness (LQE). Rather than treating AI integration as a purely technical adjustment, the framework understands educational quality as a composite outcome of four interrelated dimensions: knowledge acquisition, skills development, ethical awareness, and innovation capability. In this sense, legal education quality under AI can be expressed as:  $LQE = f(K, S, E, I)$ , where K refers to students’ mastery of legal knowledge, S to their practical and applied abilities, E to their ethical judgment and sense of social responsibility, and I to their innovative and interdisciplinary capacity. The framework assumes that effective AI integration can improve legal education only when these dimensions develop in a coordinated manner.

### ***4.1 Core Dimensions and Preliminary Indicators***

The proposed framework translates the transformation of legal education under AI into four observable dimensions. Knowledge acquisition concerns students’ understanding of legal doctrines, statutory systems, and analytical reasoning. Skills development reflects their performance in practical

settings such as moot courts, legal clinics, and problem-solving tasks. Ethical awareness emphasizes students' sensitivity to professional responsibility, legal values, and the risks associated with AI-assisted decision-making. Innovation capability refers to creativity, adaptability, and the ability to engage in cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Based on these dimensions, this study develops a preliminary indicator structure for future assessment. The instrument includes 20 items, with five items assigned to each dimension, and may be measured through a five-point Likert scale. At this stage, the purpose of the instrument is not to claim completed empirical validation, but to provide an initial analytical tool for examining the quality implications of AI-driven legal education reform.

#### 4.2 Analytical Value of the Framework

The LQE framework contributes to current discussions in two ways. First, it moves beyond viewing AI as a teaching aid and instead places AI within a broader evaluation structure of educational effectiveness. This helps connect technological change with legal talent cultivation in a more systematic manner. Second, the framework links educational reform to China's wider strategic agenda by emphasizing not only technical competence, but also ethical formation and interdisciplinary innovation. In this sense, legal education reform is treated as both a pedagogical and a governance issue. Figure 2 illustrates the basic logic of the framework by showing how AI integration may affect the four dimensions and, through them, the overall quality of legal education. The model is intended as a conceptual basis for subsequent empirical research rather than as a finalized measurement result.

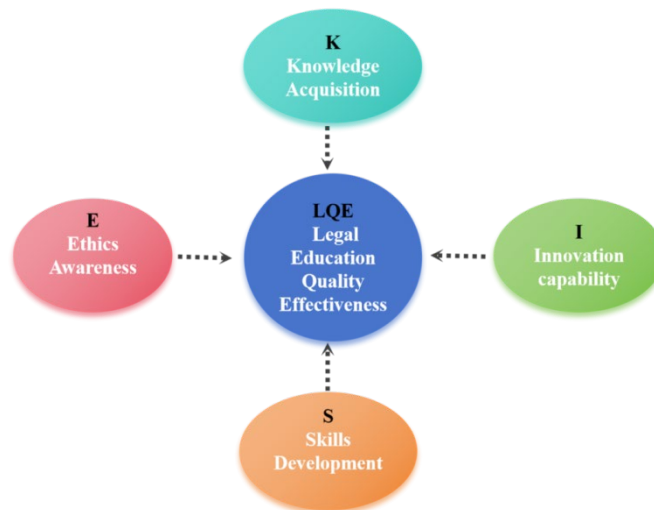


Figure 2. Theoretical Model of Legal Education Effectiveness under AI

#### 4.3 Limitations and Future Research

The present framework remains conceptual and has not yet been empirically tested. Its indicators are developed from existing literature and current reform practices, but their explanatory power and applicability across different institutional settings still require verification. Future research may refine and validate the model through broader surveys, interviews, and comparative case studies involving different types of law schools and regional contexts. Such work would help strengthen the framework's analytical precision and practical relevance.

Overall, the LQE framework provides a concise way to understand how AI may influence the quality of legal education. More importantly, it highlights that the effectiveness of legal education in the age of AI should be judged not only by knowledge transmission, but also by the balanced development of practice, ethics, and innovation.

### 5. Educational Mechanism Logic: Pathways for Systemic Reconstruction in Chinese Legal Education

With the deep integration of artificial intelligence and the focused attention of national strategies, China's legal education must undergo systemic restructuring at the level of educational mechanisms<sup>[14]</sup>.

These mechanisms go far beyond course content—they encompass organizational structures, evaluation systems, faculty development, and industry-academia collaboration. Without coherent and coordinated reforms at the mechanism level, isolated innovations in teaching may remain superficial and unsustainable.

### ***5.1 Modular and Project-Based Curriculum Reform***

The curriculum must transition from the traditional static model—centered on legal provisions and case analysis—to a more modular, project-based, and competency-driven structure<sup>[13]</sup>. For example, compulsory courses should incorporate foundational AI legal knowledge, enabling students to engage with topics such as smart contracts, legal data mining, and AI-assisted document review<sup>[12]</sup>. At the same time, “project-based learning” should be introduced. Through cross-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaboration, students should be encouraged to address complex legal issues in real or simulated settings. This approach has already shown promising results in leading international law schools<sup>[2]</sup>. Elective modules should also be more flexible and tailored to distinct training goals—such as foreign-related legal professionals, digital law governance experts, or grassroots-oriented legal talent<sup>[20]</sup>. For instance, international law modules may include courses on transnational negotiation and cross-border compliance, while digital governance tracks could offer data security law and algorithmic regulation. These differentiated modules will better serve the national strategic demand for diversified legal talent<sup>[6]</sup>.

### ***5.2 Systematic Overhaul of Practical Training***

Practical training should shift from a supplementary component to a central pillar of legal education. Greater investment in moot courts, legal clinics, and public service law centers is needed, together with dual-mentorship arrangements that combine academic and practical supervision<sup>[13]</sup>. AI tools can also be embedded in practice-based learning to simulate authentic legal scenarios and narrow the gap between classroom training and professional demand<sup>[10]</sup>.

### ***5.3 Faculty Development and Evaluation System Reform***

The integration of AI into legal education requires faculty members to strengthen both technical competence and ethical guidance. Instructors should be able not only to use AI-related tools in teaching and practice training, but also to help students critically reflect on the social and ethical risks of AI-assisted legal work<sup>[11]</sup>. However, many law teachers still lack sufficient AI literacy and interdisciplinary exposure<sup>[17]</sup>. Universities should therefore improve faculty development through targeted training, university–industry cooperation, and academic exchange. At the same time, evaluation systems should move beyond publication-centered criteria and give greater weight to teaching innovation, curriculum development, and collaborative engagement with professional practice<sup>[8]</sup>.

### ***5.4 Industry–Academia Collaboration and Institutional Support***

The reform of legal education also requires closer collaboration between universities and external professional actors. Because technological change in legal services often moves faster than curricular adjustment, law schools should strengthen cooperation with courts, law firms, arbitration institutions, and technology enterprises to improve the practical relevance of training<sup>[3]</sup>. Such cooperation may include joint practice platforms, internship programs, and applied teaching projects, helping reduce the gap between educational outcomes and professional demands<sup>[12]</sup>. In parallel, policy support in the form of funding, standards, and reform incentives remains necessary to sustain AI-related transformation in legal education<sup>[7]</sup>.

## **6. Governance Framework: Enhancing the Systemic Capacity of Legal Education**

Whether China’s legal education can successfully transition in the age of artificial intelligence depends not only on curriculum reform and teaching innovation, but also on whether its deeper governance structures are adequately aligned<sup>[4]</sup>. The governance of legal education involves a broad array of stakeholders—including universities, government agencies, industry organizations, the legal profession, and even cross-sector technology enterprises. These actors collectively shape the ecosystem within which legal education operates<sup>[17]</sup>.

### 6.1 Collaborative Governance among Diverse Stakeholders

Beyond teaching collaboration, AI-driven legal education reform also requires more effective governance coordination among multiple stakeholders. Government agencies, universities, professional organizations, and technology enterprises should work together to develop shared standards, resource platforms, and evaluation principles for legal education reform<sup>[17]</sup>. Such coordination can help reduce fragmented governance and support a more coherent reform agenda across institutions and regions<sup>[8]</sup>.

### 6.2 Institutional Mechanisms to Support Educational Governance

An effective collaborative governance model must be supported by institutionalized mechanisms. These include funding systems, project management rules, credit recognition protocols, and performance evaluation frameworks. If legacy systems persist, problems such as weak policy implementation and poor cross-sector coordination may continue to obstruct AI reform in legal education<sup>[18]</sup>. Policymakers should therefore consider dedicated support for AI-law education reform, especially for interdisciplinary and cross-regional innovation projects. These institutional arrangements also provide the basis for a more robust quality assurance system.

### 6.3 Quality Assurance in Legal Education Governance

The ultimate purpose of governance reform is to maintain the quality, accountability, and public value of legal education amid rapid technological change<sup>[15]</sup>. A sound quality assurance system should combine internal monitoring with external review, including industry participation, third-party evaluation, and appropriate public transparency. In addition, governance should incorporate timely feedback mechanisms so that emerging competency needs in AI-related legal practice can be translated into curriculum and training adjustments<sup>[20]</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is reshaping legal education in a structural rather than incremental way. In the Chinese context, responding to this transformation requires coordinated reform across national strategy, technological adaptation, educational mechanisms, and governance arrangements. The goal is not simply to introduce new tools into the classroom, but to cultivate legal professionals with stronger interdisciplinary competence, practical ability, and ethical judgment. Looking ahead, AI will not replace legal education, but it will continue to redefine its content, methods, and institutional logic. For this reason, legal education reform must remain anchored in professional ethics and social responsibility while making full use of technological opportunities. When supported by strategic guidance, institutional coordination, and sustainable governance, AI can become an important driver of the modernization of legal education in China.

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