

# Problem Analysis and Effective Strategies of Ecological Civilization Education for Undergraduates in the New Age

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**Abstract:** The ecological civilization in the new age is one important aspect for undergraduates. We must enhance the concept of their civilization and improve the quality of civilization. Carrying out ecological civilization education in colleges and universities has a practical significance for enriching the contents of ideological and political education to realize their all-round development. Nowadays, some undergraduates lack awareness of ecological civilization and ignore its importance. For this reason, undergraduates need to pay attention to ecological civilization and improve their own ecological civilization literacy to promote the all-round development in qualities in the new age. This paper mainly analyzes the current problems in undergraduates' ecological civilization education and explores effective strategies to solve the current problems in undergraduates' ecological civilization education. The strategies include integrating ecological civilization resources, innovating methods of ecological civilization, strengthening ecological educator team construction, embodying ecological culture in campus construction and creating the atmosphere, emphasizing innovative practices for ecological civilization, strengthening publicity of social-ecological civilization, and attaching importance to family education of ecological civilization.

**Keywords:** Undergraduates; Ecological civilization; Effective strategies; Curriculum administration

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## 1. Introduction

Years ago, it was put forward that the construction of ecological civilization would affect people's well-being. However, ecological problems are becoming increasingly serious at present. We must establish a social concept of ecological civilization. Additionally, it was also pointed out that we need to firmly establish the social concept of ecological civilization, promote the harmonious development between humans and nature to make every effort to protect the ecological environment. The development of ecological civilization requires people to establish awareness through practical activities. However, some people are ignorant of ecological civilization and environmental awareness. In order to promote the development of ecological civilization, we need to

cultivate ecological talents. “Contemporary college students are not only witnesses of ecological civilization, but also practitioners of ecological civilization”<sup>[1]</sup>. They are the main force for China’s ecological civilization construction as well as the maker and executor of it. Undergraduates’ ecological civilization literacy directly influences the development of China’s ecological civilization. Undergraduates who are energetic and dare to take responsibility need to establish a correct view of ecological civilization and shoulder the important task of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, in the new age, colleges and universities should increase ecological civilization education for them and guide them to establish a correct awareness of ecological civilization so that they can consciously implement the behavior of ecological civilization.

## **2. Connotation**

To have a better understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, humans have practiced repeatedly. Ecological civilization is a major achievement of social progress for human beings<sup>[2]</sup>. When treating the relationship between humans and nature, we should achieve a higher degree of civilization without surpassing nature and destroying its environment. We should improve our relationship with nature and follow its laws. Chen and Sun mentioned: “Ecological civilization education absorbs the achievements of environmental education and its sustainable development and promotes to change the whole way of civilization and people’s basic lifestyles”<sup>[3]</sup>. Since 2012, our nation has paid special attention to the construction of ecological civilization, pointing out that it will affect the sustainable development of our nation and society. Colleges and universities should lay stress on the ecological civilization education for undergraduates and make them become the leaders in building a beautiful China so as to drive more people to participate and work together to achieve the great goal of a beautiful China. Ecological civilization education mainly aims to improve people’s awareness and change their lifestyles through education and finally make them consciously practice the concept of protecting the ecological environment. It mainly includes contents and significance, some researchers believe that its content includes the green spirit education of ecological civilization cognition, ecological civilization morality and ecological civilization. Some researchers believe that ecological civilization education for undergraduates is conducive to their all-round development and the implementation of the scientific outlook on development. From the current research situation about ecological civilization education undergraduates, different researchers provided varying opinions from various aspects. For example, Lv analyzed the school system, college students’ lack of enthusiasm for participation, and social environment constraints<sup>[4]</sup>; Deng analyzed the educational contents, educational methods, ecological civilization consciousness, and ecological civilization behavior of undergraduates<sup>[5]</sup>; Zhang analyzed educational subject, educational object, educational environment, and educational carrier<sup>[6]</sup>; Yang analyzed colleges and universities, society, families and college students<sup>[7]</sup>.

## **3. Problems and causes**

### **3.1. Problems in ecological civilization education for undergraduates**

In recent years, ecological and environmental problems have become increasingly prominent, and the various problems of the natural environment have drawn our attention. Our nation has attached great importance to ecological civilization and put forward higher requirements for undergraduates in ecological civilization education, but new problems arise. They mainly reflect in the following aspects. Firstly, our nation emphasizes ecological civilization education, but the contents of ecological civilization education for undergraduates are not specific enough. At colleges and universities, the relevant departments rarely bring undergraduates’

ecological civilization education into the teaching plan, they just carry out systematic learning and education for undergraduates majoring in ecology. While there are no special teaching materials for undergraduates majoring in non-ecology. They mainly integrate into the classroom to understand the relevant knowledge of ecological civilization through curriculum thought and politics. What's more, the contents are superficial and appear sporadically, so undergraduates tend to forget them after learning. Therefore, we cannot achieve the ideal educational effect at all. Besides, the ecological civilization education in some colleges and universities cannot meet the development of the new era and they do not adjust the educational contents according to the needs of national development. As a result, many undergraduates do not understand how to integrate ecological civilization into politics, economy, culture, and society. Secondly, the methods of ecological civilization education for undergraduates are single, are mainly based on traditional classrooms, and lack practical education on ecological and cultural activities. It cannot integrate the theory into college students' daily life and study, either, which leads to students not participating in the practice of ecological environmental protection directly. Consequently, undergraduates feel too bored to achieve the ideal educational effect. Thirdly, colleges and universities are short of teacher teams for ecological civilization education. At the 19th National Congress, it was emphasized that China would be built into a modern socialist power by the middle of the century. To achieve this goal, we need high-quality excellent talents. The field of ecological civilization is no exception, too. Teachers are the key to the cultivation of human talents. However, teacher teams of ecological civilization education in colleges and universities have not been established yet. In recent years, the concept of ecological civilization has changed rapidly. Non-professional teacher teams still lack knowledge of ecological civilization so they cannot master the knowledge. When carrying out ecological civilization education for undergraduates, they can only teach relevant common knowledge so it is difficult to achieve the ideal effect of ecological civilization education. Undergraduates are inefficient in participating in activities about ecological protection. They cannot achieve the "unity of knowledge and practice," only focusing on forms of ecological activities, resulting in a lack of participation in ecological practice.

### **3.2. Causes of the problems in ecological civilization education for undergraduates**

Although our nation attaches great importance to ecological civilization education for undergraduates, there are still many problems in the process of implementation.

Firstly, there are insufficient resources for ecological civilization education in colleges and universities. Ecological civilization education started lately in China. Most colleges and universities have no concrete plans for undergraduates' ecological civilization education. There being insufficient curriculum and teachers as well as ecological culture construction will greatly affect ecological civilization education. In terms of curriculum, there are no unified textbooks. Students can only know a little through other courses, which makes them lack a comprehensive understanding of ecological civilization education. Furthermore, teachers' ecological civilization literacy is low. Many colleges and universities lack investment and infrastructure in the construction of ecological culture. Some colleges and universities are short of publicity ecological culture which causes a lack of ecological environment atmosphere on the campus. Besides, colleges and universities have not researched an ecological civilization education system and college teachers carry out ecological civilization education according to the relevant national ecological civilization documents, which is not combined with the actual situation of the university and its undergraduates. As a result, the purpose of ecological civilization education for undergraduates cannot be achieved.

Secondly, most people lack social-ecological civilization education. When meeting a contradiction between the demand for economic and social development and the need to protect the ecological environment, some

enterprises choose to illegally develop natural resources just to pursue their interests and neglect the need to protect the ecological environment, which results in the degradation of the ecosystem directly. Undergraduates growing up in such an atmosphere in which there is a lack of awareness of protecting the ecological environment cannot form a good concept of ecological civilization.

Thirdly, ecological civilization education in the family environment is insufficient. Education in the family environment has an imperceptible influence on children, good family environment plays a positive role in children's concept of ecological civilization. However, in real life, some parents cannot set good examples in ecological civilization education, which makes their children's ecological civilization literacy low.

## **4. Effective strategies**

Our nation will mobilize the whole society to enable people to participate in the practical action of ecological civilization construction by 2035. Undergraduates, as the future hope of our country, will shoulder this important task. We must strengthen ecological civilization education for them, cultivate their sense of responsibility for protecting the ecological environment, and let them consciously join in the activities of ecological civilization.

### **4.1. Integrating ecological civilization education resources in colleges and universities**

School is an organization that carries out education in an organized and planned way. It is a place for teachers and students to live, study, and work. It is an ecological unit with the theme of condensing teachers and students<sup>[8]</sup>. College and university are important places for undergraduates to receive ecological civilization education. They should play an important role in providing rich ecological civilization education resources for undergraduates. They must give full play to the main role of ideological and political courses as well as the auxiliary role of general education courses, elective courses, and other courses to enrich the contents of ecological civilization education. Teachers can deeply explore rich cases related to ecological civilization education according to the characteristics and contents of the course, integrate them into classroom teaching, and inspire students to reflect through discussion so as to silently carry out ecological civilization education for them. For example, through chemical courses, we can teach that the pollution of chemical pollutants to air, water, and soil will endanger people's health; through biology courses, we can tell the serious consequences caused by the destructive impact on the ecological environment; through law courses, we can teach laws and regulations related to protection of ecological environment; through history courses, we can teach the process of ecological governance in China and make college students realize the importance of environmental protection; through English courses, when involving related ecological environment contents, we can introduce cases to guide students to focus on ecological problems to enhance their awareness of ecological civilization. In addition, we can set ecological civilization education as an elective course, requiring college students to take an ecological civilization education course.

### **4.2. Constantly innovating methods of ecological civilization education**

Ecological civilization education is not just for undergraduates who are from a certain major, but from all majors. Although there are no unified teaching materials and methods, colleges and universities can constantly explore and innovate ecological civilization education methods suitable for the actual situation. We must combine theory and practice so that undergraduates can consciously practice the concept of ecological civilization and actively participate in practical activities. That is to say, we must adhere to the unity of knowledge and practice, emphasize on learning true knowledge and understanding the real meaning in practice, and strengthen training to improve our ability in practice. In teaching content, teachers need to deepen the

content and constantly explore rich and diverse teaching forms from the strategic perspective of strengthening ecological civilization education in the new era, like relevant videos, pictures, and cases from the Internet. When receiving ecological civilization education, students can understand common knowledge about ecological civilization. Universities and colleges can arrange some practical activities, such as organizing a general cleaning activity for every class each semester, organizing civilized volunteer services in the community, asking students to walk into nature and taking photos of animals and plants, etc. Undergraduates not only understand the theoretical knowledge of ecological civilization education but also carry out practical activities. In this way, they can enhance their sense of responsibility to protect the ecological environment. In addition, in the Internet age, browsing network platform information and watching videos have become an indispensable part of undergraduates' daily lives. However, due to having no tasks, they just browse casually to keep up with the trend of the age. Colleges and universities can seize the opportunity to set up a special area for ecological civilization on the online public platform according to students' interests and hobbies, irregularly publishing the dynamic information of ecological civilization and cases of ecological civilization destruction. Students can understand the current situation about the ecological environment and the serious consequences of destroying the ecological environment. In practice, through publicity and sharing of typical cases, undergraduates' enthusiasm for protecting the ecological environment can be inspired.

### **4.3. Strengthening ecological educator team construction**

Generally, ecological civilization education for undergraduates mainly comes from college teachers and counselors whose speech and gestures have a great influence on college students. As we all know, teachers are the engineers of the human soul and the inheritors of human civilization. They undertake the important task of spreading knowledge, ideas, and truth, shaping the soul, life, and people of the new era. College educators play a vital role in ecological civilization education for undergraduates. When teaching or doing ideological work, they should set good examples and provide positive guidance to undergraduates. Therefore, it is particularly important for colleges and universities to strengthen ecological civilization construction for educators to improve their quality.

Colleges and universities should strengthen the construction of educator teams through various forms, such as carrying out ecological civilization education and training for teachers. College teachers should insist that educators receive education first, strive to become the disseminators of advanced ideology and culture, and better fulfill the responsibility of guiding the healthy development of the student<sup>[9]</sup>. College and university teachers can guide and educate students by setting good examples if they have a strong sense of ecological civilization and consciously implement the behavior of protecting the ecological environment. In order to reach this goal, colleges and universities should encourage educators to study the relevant ecological civilization education forums and academic activities that are organized at home and abroad so that they can learn the current national ecological conditions and relevant policies, communicate with each other to enhance the awareness of ecological civilization, and enrich the knowledge of ecological civilization. Through these methods, we can launch a new situation in which all educators jointly carry out ecological civilization education. Former Soviet educator Sukhomlinsky said that teachers should absorb the whole ocean of light in order to enable students to obtain a little light of knowledge. As college educators, we must realize that we not only pass knowledge to them but also cultivate students' overall abilities. In terms of education, we should keep up with the development of the new age. Only in this way can we cultivate excellent talents for our country and society.

#### **4.4. Embodying ecological culture in campus construction and creating the atmosphere**

The university campus is a necessary place for undergraduates' daily activities. The campus environment will unconsciously affect them. In terms of campus construction, it should embody ideological and moral education. Through the distinctive campus landscape, such as sculptures, monuments, and memorials of celebrities and great figures, we can improve students' moral cognition and ideological and moral quality, which will have a significant impact on the cultivation of modern talents with socialist material civilization, spiritual civilization, and political civilization. We must achieve reasonable planning to make space layout reflect the concept of harmony and unity between man and nature, we should reasonably arrange teaching areas, leisure areas, activity areas, and ecological areas to fully reflect their functions. In the ecological area, teachers and students are provided with brief equipment for exchange. Sitting on the stool in the middle of grass and vegetation, they can enjoy the beautiful scenery and listen to the singing of birds. The students' sound of reading in a loud voice is integrated with the singing of birds, which is harmonious and natural. In this campus environment, college students can virtually increase their awareness of ecological environment protection. In addition, we can set up environmental protection slogans next to the landscape, place classified dustbins in proper places, and put poems, essays, and portraits in the corridors of libraries and dormitory buildings to realize the purpose of ecological civilization education for college students.

#### **4.5. Emphasizing innovative practices for ecological civilization**

Undergraduates should not be limited to theory in ecological civilization education, but it is more important that they should participate in ecological civilization activities. Colleges and universities should make them step into nature and participate in the practical activities of ecological protection through various forms of cultural activities, public welfare activities, and community activities. When talking about education, "young people should not be confined to books and rooms all day. They should be allowed to participate in some social practice to open their horizons and increase their social experience" <sup>[2,10]</sup>. We should let university associations give full play to their role in establishing special environmental protection associations. They can publicize the knowledge of ecological civilization education and carry out ecological civilization education activities, such as holding lectures and knowledge competitions on ecological civilization, watching and films and television works related to ecological civilization to improve undergraduates' further understanding of ecological civilization. If conditions permit, colleges and universities can organize a trip outside of the campus, such as visiting nature reserves, forest parks, botanical gardens, wildlife parks, and so on. By integrating into nature, they can enhance their awareness of ecological civilization and recognize the importance of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

#### **4.6. Strengthening publicity of social-ecological civilization**

Undergraduates receive education not only at school, but also in society because they eventually enter society after graduating from school. Therefore, the social environment has a great impact on them, especially on their behavior habits. First of all, there must be a scientific ecological civilization system in order to provide institutional guarantee for undergraduates' ecological civilization education. At the conference celebrating the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up, it was emphasized that we should strengthen the construction of ecological civilization and carry out the strictest ecological and environmental protection system. Now, undergraduates increasingly rely on the Internet, we should give full play to the publicity role of mass media to actively publicize the knowledge of ecological civilization, western ecological civilization thought, ecological civilization thought in Chinese traditional culture, the current situation and existing problems of Chinese ecological civilization, etc. In this way, they can be imperceptibly affected when browsing the Internet.

#### **4.7. Attaching importance to family education of ecological civilization**

Family is the first school for students, and parents are their first teachers. Family environment has a great influence on undergraduates' ideas and behavior habits. It is essential to strengthen family ecological civilization education. Undergraduates' ecological civilization education is inseparable from their parents' correct guidance. It was emphasized that the majority of families attach importance to publicity and personal education, teach knowledge, cultivate morality, and set a good example to help children buckle the first button of life and take the first step of life through the influenced environment ("to help children buckle the first button of life and take the first step of life through the influenced environment" is a metaphor for the value orientation of youth; the value orientation of young people determines the value orientation of the whole society in the future, and young people are in the period in which their value is forming and establishing, thus it is very important to pay attention to the cultivation of values in this period; it is similar to buttoning clothes, if the first button is wrong, the others follow). Parents should lead children to get close to and feel nature from an early age, guide them to love and respect nature, and explain the importance of protecting nature as well as the benefits of green and low-carbon travel for children.

### **5. Conclusion**

In the new age, research on undergraduates' ecological civilization education requires a long-term effort, and there is still a large research space. All educators in colleges and universities need to work together to enrich the contents of ecological civilization education. Colleges and universities need to closely integrate classrooms, life, and the Internet, and deepen the concept of ecological civilization so as to cultivate builders and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics that are needed in the new age to promote the construction of a beautiful China as soon as possible.

### **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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