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An Analysis of the Communication Effectiveness of Laws and Regulations on Higher Education

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Abstract: Comprehensively promoting law-based education governance, law-based school operations, and law-based university management is a crucial objective for enhancing legal compliance in higher education. It is also essential for improving educational quality and consolidating lessons learned from long-term reforms and developments in the education sector. In recent years, certain incidents in some colleges and universities—such as breaches of regulations and violations of professional ethics by staff—have attracted public attention, prompting widespread discussions on law-based governance in higher education. The underlying cause of these issues lies in the fact that existing laws and regulations in higher education have not been fully internalized. From a communication studies perspective, the core challenge is the limited effectiveness of communication regarding these laws and regulations. Therefore, systematically analyzing the communication channels of higher education laws and regulations, identifying practical obstacles in the communication process, and scientifically developing a comprehensive countermeasure system are of great significance for effectively enhancing their communication effectiveness.

Keywords: laws and regulations on higher education; communication logic; communication effectiveness; improvement path

1. Introduction

As an important part of the education system, colleges and universities shoulder the major historical mission of practicing the rule of law. With the ongoing development of legal frameworks, the system of laws and regulations on higher education has been further improved, and the legal status of colleges and universities has undergone changes. The focus of educational administrators and university management on effective management, as well as adherence to law-based governance and university operations, profoundly impacts the quality of higher education. How college teachers practice the laws and regulations on higher education, and whether they have good legal literacy to teach in accordance with the law, is related to the implementation of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Educators' legal awareness and the protection of their legitimate rights are crucial for ensuring high-quality talent development in universities.

In recent years, media reports on issues related to breaches of regulations and ethics in some colleges and universities have triggered widespread public discussions on law-based governance in higher education. The crux of the problem lies in whether the formulated laws and regulations on higher education have been comprehensively and thoroughly implemented. From the perspective of communication studies, it is due to the insufficient communication effectiveness of these laws and regulations. Analyzing how the laws and regulations on higher education are communicated, identifying the problems in the communication process, and exploring ways to improve the relevant deficiencies are

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of great significance for enhancing the communication effectiveness of the laws and regulations on higher education.

2. Reasons for the Insufficient Communication Effectiveness of Laws and Regulations on Higher Education

2.1. There Are Deficiencies in the Management and Supervision Mechanism, and the Prevention and Control of Violations Lacks Effectiveness

In their internal management, some colleges and universities have problems of regulatory absence, which are particularly reflected in fields such as the use of research funds and the operation of power. For example, a small number of researchers and relevant departments embezzle research funds by falsifying meeting fees, accommodation fees, catering fees, etc., resulting in illegal surplus funds, which reflects the imperfection of the school's supervision mechanisms in links such as fund approval and process auditing. Some managers misuse authority or resources for personal or affiliated benefits, reflecting insufficient oversight mechanisms, which exposes the insufficient restraint on the operation of power. The root cause of such problems lies in the formalization of regulatory procedures and the ambiguity of the responsibility investigation mechanism, which leads to the failure of laws and regulations to restrain management behaviors, resulting in a "vacuous operation of systems".

2.2. Weak Legal Awareness of Subjects and Inadequate Practice of Professional Standards

There are shortcomings in the legal cognition and behavioral consciousness of various subjects in colleges and universities. From managers to teachers, there are varying degrees of weakening legal awareness: Some managers prioritize personal preferences over institutional regulations, showing weak adherence to established governance rules; Some teachers fail to fully comply with professional ethical standards, reflecting inadequate observance of educational laws and regulations, which runs counter to the requirement of "abiding by professional ethics and being a model for others" in the Teachers' Law, reflecting their disregard for educational laws, regulations and professional standards; some researchers lack respect for the norms of fund use and regard public funds as "disposable resources", showing vague cognition of legal responsibilities. This phenomenon of "knowing the law but not abiding by it, and observing the law but not strictly" is essentially a manifestation that legal awareness has not been internalized into behavioral norms.

2.3. Singular Forms of Communication and Education, and Insufficient Internalization of Laws and Regulations

The communication of laws and regulations on higher education in colleges and universities fails to achieve "penetration into the mind and heart", resulting in subjects' understanding of the system remaining superficial. At present, the communication of laws and regulations mostly relies on one-time activities such as pre-service training. The content mainly consists of clause interpretation and concept explanation, lacking in-depth case analysis and interactive experience, which makes it difficult to stimulate the initiative of learning. The forms of communication are singular, with insufficient integration of online and offline methods, and a normalized learning atmosphere has not yet been formed. As a result, most people only know that "they must not touch the red line", but lack a systematic understanding of the connotation of laws and regulations and the boundaries of rights and obligations. Such insufficient communication effectiveness makes it impossible for laws and regulations to be transformed into subjects' conscious codes of conduct, ultimately leading to a disconnect between "institutional awareness" and "practical compliance".

3. The Communication Logic of Laws and Regulations on Higher Education

Lasswell's 5W model is a classic foundational theory in communication studies. Originating in the 1930s, this theory was developed by the renowned communication scholar Harold Lasswell, who focused on political communication and propaganda techniques during World War I, ultimately formulating a communication process model summarized as: "Who? Says what? To whom? Through which channel? With what effect?" — known as the 5W model of communication. This classic theory has been in use to this day, consistently focusing on the exploration of five research elements, with its core being the study of how to achieve effective communication.

As a compulsory course for pre-service training of university teachers, laws and regulations on higher education possess both educational and legal popularization attributes, and constitute a standardized communication activity. Analyzing its various elements and links using Lasswell's 5W model of communication will be highly beneficial for enhancing the effectiveness of laws and regulations on higher education.

Pre-service training, as one form of communication activity for laws and regulations on higher education, is conducted annually, mainly targeting newly recruited university teachers and administrative staff. The teaching activity can be analyzed from the perspective of the 5W model in communication studies.

1) Who?

The communicator. At the macro level, the communicators of laws and regulations on higher education are considered to be the state, whose goal is to promote the high-quality development of higher education and strengthen educational governance. At the meso level, they are universities at all levels, aiming to improve university governance structures, strengthen democratic management in universities, and standardize educational behaviors in universities. At the micro level, they are the teachers (lecturers) of courses related to laws and regulations on higher education. As direct disseminators, their teaching style, methods, and interpretation of laws and regulations all influence the communication effect.

2) Says what?

The communication content. The communication content of laws and regulations on higher education is a specialized course. Taking the course *Laws and Regulations on Higher Education in Hainan Province* as an example, it generally includes five thematic modules: "Starting from the Awareness of Educational Legal System," "Essentials of Educational Laws and Regulations," "Interpretation of the Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China," "Interpretation of the Teachers' Law of the People's Republic of China," and "From Educational Legal System to Educational Rule of Law." The relevant communication content mainly consists of general, conceptual, clause-based, and case-based materials. Typically, case teaching methods can improve the acceptability and comprehension of the course, but due to time constraints, it is difficult to conduct in-depth discussions of cases in the communication process. Overall, the content of laws and regulations on higher education is characterized by being dull and monotonous, lacking in appeal, which to some extent increases the difficulty of achieving good communication effectiveness.

3) To whom?

The audience. The recipients of the course are new staff members who have just joined universities and are about to or have already engaged in teaching and administrative work. Most of the audience is in the initial stage of understanding the content of laws and regulations on higher education, and needs case studies to assist in comprehending the relatively obscure connotations of these laws and regulations. This means that to achieve a better communication effect, it is necessary to conduct high-frequency communication and interaction with the audience to help them better remember and understand the communicated content. A single learning experience is insufficient to achieve in-depth learning and internalization [1].

4) Through which channel?

The communication channel. The communication of laws and regulations on higher education mainly takes the form of teaching. Under normal circumstances, communicators adopt face-to-face teaching to enhance cognition and interaction with the audience. However, under special circumstances, such as the impact of the epidemic, online teaching has become the main communication channel. Although this form can convey course information, the spatial separation makes it difficult to form a sense of identity between the two sides of the screen, greatly reducing the communication effectiveness of the course content.

5) With what effect?

The communication effect. A survey of some audience members who have just completed the course shows that most of them have a vague memory of the content. Based solely on their existing literacy in the rule of law, morality, and safety, they realize that the state formulates laws and regulations on higher education to better govern universities, ensure teaching, and are aware that universities and teachers must adhere to legal and regulatory boundaries in their professional conduct. This communication effect can be described as preliminary, superficial, and shallow. From the perspective of the connotation of legal awareness, it merely represents an awakening to the rules of legal awareness, while deeper connotations fail to take root. Moreover, such rule awakening tends to fade over time.

4. Enhancing the Communication Effectiveness of Laws and Regulations on Higher Education

Promoting law-based education governance, school operation, and university management is crucial for standardizing higher education practices and supporting educational modernization; and it is a summary of the experiences gained from the reform and development of education over a long period of time [2]. The essence of educational laws and regulations is to standardize behaviors and adjust interests. Effectively communicating laws and regulations on higher education helps unify six subjects — governments, schools, teachers, society, students, and parents — into an integrated whole, jointly forming a positive top-down and bottom-up cycle of laws and regulations.

4.1. Fostering a Consistent Learning Environment

The ultimate goal of communicators is to internalize the knowledge of laws and regulations on higher education into the spiritual consciousness of educators in colleges and universities. Within the framework of national educational policies and guidelines, communicators should make every effort to create a normalized learning atmosphere for these laws and regulations. In addition to the existing pre-service training for university teachers, the frequency of learning activities on higher education laws and regulations for university teachers and administrative staff should be increased, and the forms of normalized learning should be enriched — such as case teaching, sharing by typical figures, campus publicity, film screenings, and online learning — to enhance teachers' awareness of laws and regulations. develop and enhance their practical application skills of these laws and regulations, which not only ensures the training effect but also provides a basis for optimizing the training model. In a normalized atmosphere of educational learning, it is easier to improve educators' understanding of the connotations of laws and regulations on higher education.

4.2. Strengthening Teachers' Ability to Apply Laws and Regulations

Article 8 of the Teachers' Law stipulates the duties that university teachers should perform, such as providing students with basic education in the Constitution, patriotism, ethnic unity, legal education, ideological and moral education, cultural, scientific, and technological education; organizing beneficial social activities for students; cultivating awareness of educational laws and regulations; and improving students' ideological and

moral qualities [3]. University teachers are responsible for inspiring students' legal awareness, teaching legal knowledge, and guiding students to use legal knowledge to protect their rights and solve problems in practical teaching. This requires teachers to continuously strengthen their study of laws and regulations and cultivate and improve their ability to apply them in practice [4].

4.3. Promoting Continuous Reform and Innovation in University Legal Construction

Universities should adopt a value-oriented approach to education, focusing on fundamental questions of whom to educate, what types of talents to cultivate, and how to cultivate them. Legal construction in universities plays a crucial role in supporting educational objectives. University administrative departments should strictly and practically implement law-based school governance and law-based education [5]. They can regularly conduct research, follow-up visits, and exchanges with departments, teachers, and students to identify problems in school management, teachers' and students' rights and interests, campus safety, and campus activities, and widely listen to teachers' and students' opinions and suggestions to encourage their participation in the implementation of higher education laws and regulations. Meanwhile, universities should allocate corresponding funds to establish professional legal education and consulting departments. On the one hand, this facilitates the professional development of legal education in universities and improves their ability to administer according to law; on the other hand, it encourages teachers and students to pay attention to higher education laws and regulations and protect their legitimate rights and interests. Ultimately, through atmosphere building, cultivation of application abilities, and continuous reform and innovation, a strong multi-dimensional joint effort can be formed to enhance the communication effectiveness of laws and regulations on higher education.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the communication effectiveness of laws and regulations in higher education, identifying systemic challenges such as inadequate management and supervision mechanisms, weak legal awareness among educators, and the limited scope of existing legal education practices. By applying Lasswell's 5W communication model, the research underscores that improving the effectiveness of legal communication requires a comprehensive approach that simultaneously addresses the communicator, the message, the audience, the channels, and the outcomes.

Beyond immediate improvements in teaching and compliance, the strategies proposed—cultivating a normalized learning atmosphere, strengthening educators' ability to integrate law into practice, and fostering continuous reform in university legal construction—hold broader implications. They contribute to embedding legal norms into the institutional culture of universities, enhancing participatory governance, and shaping educators as role models of legal consciousness. Over time, this can strengthen universities' role as incubators of a law-abiding society, thereby aligning higher education with the broader goals of rule-of-law development.

Future research may further explore how emerging communication technologies, interdisciplinary pedagogical models, and comparative perspectives across different educational systems can be leveraged to optimize the dissemination of legal knowledge. Such efforts will not only deepen the theoretical framework of legal communication in higher education but also provide actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators seeking to build a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable academic environment.

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