

Review

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# Research on the Idea of Governing Colleges and Universities According to Law

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**Abstract:** Higher vocational colleges face issues such as institutional implementation deviations, insufficient legal literacy among faculty and students, and inadequate risk prevention mechanisms in the process of promoting law-based governance. This paper analyzes the current status of law-based governance in higher vocational colleges and explores strategies for improving the legal system, enhancing the legal literacy of faculty and students, and establishing long-term risk prevention mechanisms. Building an internal governance structure based on law, strengthening practical legal education, and establishing diversified supervision mechanisms are crucial for achieving law-based management in higher vocational colleges. The paper also suggests using digital means to enhance the enforcement and transparency of regulations, to promote deeper development of law-based governance in higher vocational colleges.

**Keywords:** higher vocational colleges; law-based school management; system construction; legal education; risk prevention and control

## 1. Introduction

As the development of a coordinated legal framework for the country, government, and society accelerates, the vocational education and social training functions undertaken by higher vocational colleges have become increasingly prominent. In this process, governing schools according to law not only concerns the standardization and fairness of school governance but also directly impacts the quality of talent cultivation and social recognition. Faced with an increasingly diversified range of educational entities, complex internal and external environments, and constantly evolving legal policies, higher vocational colleges must integrate legal thinking into their institutional design and implementation to ensure that their educational activities comply with national laws and regulations while achieving an organic unity of autonomy and distinctive positioning.

## 2. Theoretical and Policy Basis of Governing Schools According to Law

Within the framework of institutional theory, the rule of law signifies not only the mandatory constraints imposed by external rules on school behavior, but also a driving force for self-improvement and governance innovation. This perspective profoundly reveals that only when vocational colleges internalize legal norms into their daily decision-making and management as a fundamental mindset can they truly transform from passive compliance to proactive adherence to the law. As early as the initial stage of legal education research in China, scholars emphasized that school governance should be guided by

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the Constitution and the Education Law, advocating a governance structure based on internal checks and balances and regulated administrative oversight, thereby ensuring the orderly operation of educational activities within the framework of the rule of law. A multi-level, multi-channel mechanism for checks and balances not only prevents the risks of power concentration but also allows vocational colleges greater flexibility for independent innovation. The continuous attention and support from the national level for vocational education provide solid policy support for governing schools according to the law. From the provisions on the basic functions of schools in the "Education Law of the People's Republic of China", to the emphasis on the close alignment between vocational education and industrial needs in the "Vocational Education Law", and further to the explicit call for strengthening the legal system for school governance in the "Implementation Plan for Reform of Higher Vocational Education", these policy documents are interconnected and progressively layered. They not only outline a macro blueprint for governing schools according to the law in vocational colleges but also propose verifiable indicators and pathways at the operational level.

Despite clear policy guidance, some institutions still treat the rule of law as an optional procedural requirement, or even only make superficial updates during institutional revisions. This undoubtedly undermines the potential for enhancing governance efficiency through legal thinking. Therefore, integrating legal thinking into internal governance structures should not be limited to formulating new regulations but must also be reinforced through multiple measures such as legal risk assessment, compliance reviews, and comprehensive training for all campus personnel. Otherwise, the school's commitment to governing according to law may remain superficial. From international experience, excellent vocational colleges often focus on building a closed-loop management model of "law — rules — responsibility". When there are deviations or inadequate enforcement in regulations, they can quickly initiate internal accountability procedures and, where appropriate, pursue correction through authorized legal channels. This approach significantly enhances governance transparency and credibility, offering a potentially valuable reference for the improvement of mechanisms in China's higher vocational colleges, provided contextual adaptations are made [1].

### **3. The Current Situation and Problems of Law-Based School Management in Higher Vocational Colleges**

Currently, vocational colleges have initially established a foundational institutional framework in the process of governing according to law, including school charters, teaching management norms, and student management systems. However, these systems generally suffer from issues such as coarse design and poor operability, which not only weaken their enforcement but also hinder the improvement of management efficiency. For example, in student record management, some institutions have yet to achieve information management and still rely on traditional paper archives and manual operations. This lag not only leads to untimely updates of student information but also causes delays in handling changes in student status. In a special inspection conducted by a provincial education department in 2022, it was found that three vocational colleges had errors in graduate degree registration due to outdated student record management systems. Regarding teacher hiring and evaluation mechanisms, most institutions primarily assess technical skills, while neglecting soft indicators such as legal literacy and professional ethics. This one-sided evaluation can lead to a tendency among teachers to prioritize professional performance or output over compliance with legal principles, thereby affecting the cultivation of a legal culture on campus. Insufficient participation from faculty and students is another key factor constraining the deepening of governance according to law. Although many institutions have established democratic management mechanisms like faculty congresses and student appeal committees, these organizations often remain superficial and fail to truly serve their purpose of gathering public opinion and supervising

decision-making. The deeper issue lies in the fact that some administrators of higher vocational colleges have yet to establish a legal mindset of equal rights and responsibilities. When dealing with campus disputes, they tend to resort to administrative measures rather than legal avenues. In some cases, schools have been reported to terminate contracts with teachers through administrative decisions without fulfilling severance compensation obligations stipulated in the Labor Contract Law, which has led to unfavorable rulings in labor arbitration. Additionally, some institutions overly rely on school rules when handling student disciplinary issues, neglecting the requirements for educational administrative penalties, which results in the revocation of disciplinary decisions due to procedural flaws. This exposes the weakness in the legal awareness of administrators and the lack of effective constraints on internal power operations. Without fundamentally changing their mindset, merely patching up institutional regulations will hardly achieve true governance according to law [2].

#### **4. The Path of Improving the System of Law-Based Campus**

In the face of potential loopholes and delays in the current system's implementation, vocational colleges must achieve an organic integration of institutional development and the cultivation of a rule-of-law culture at the top-level design stage. Only then can regulations not only remain on paper but also truly permeate daily management and the behavior of faculty and students. Legal compliance should be integrated throughout the drafting and revision process of rules and regulations. From the very beginning of the formulation, it is necessary to invite legal experts with practical experience to participate in discussions and widely solicit opinions from stakeholders both inside and outside the campus. Through seminars or focused discussions, the best balance between legality and operability should be found, so that when implemented, issues arising from vague wording or procedural deficiencies are avoided. At the same time, after drafting the regulations, the school should organize small-scale sandbox exercises to simulate typical scenarios, testing the feasibility of the clauses. This helps to promptly identify potential problems and avoid discrepancies between ideals and reality caused by overlooked details in practical implementation.

Vocational colleges need to establish a dynamic update mechanism with distinct characteristics, which means maintaining institutional stability while granting flexibility for timely adjustments. This requires the school to set up an evaluation team composed of legal affairs departments and various functional departments after the system is released. The team should regularly conduct both quantitative and qualitative assessments of the system's implementation effects, including compliance rates, incident reports, and satisfaction levels among faculty and students. They must collect execution data, compile cases of violations and disputes, and gather genuine feedback and improvement suggestions from faculty and students through interviews or questionnaires. These primary sources will then be used to make targeted revisions to the system. This approach not only helps prevent legal risks but also promotes effective governance innovation, as it ensures the continuity of regulations while enabling swift responses to new situations, thus continuously aligning the system with the actual needs of education and teaching and continuously optimizing it. By advancing these two main strategies in tandem, vocational colleges can respect legal boundaries while proactively adjusting their governance principles based on their own positioning and development stage, thereby maintaining good adaptability and vitality in a complex and ever-changing external environment.

#### **5. Strategies to Improve the Legal Literacy of Teachers and Students**

In the process of building a rule-of-law campus atmosphere, respect and adherence to rules by teachers and students are core elements of the entire ecosystem. Therefore, it is necessary for schools to deeply integrate legal education into talent cultivation, making

it not only part of students' knowledge systems but also a natural extension of their behavioral patterns. Simply placing legal courses in general foundational subjects cannot meet the training needs, as such courses often lack context-specific relevance; therefore, they must be extended to specialized courses and practical components to enhance applicability and engagement. For example, regular case study seminars can be held where students analyze real campus conflicts or social hotspots, experiencing the rigor and applicability of legal logic through debates and discussions. In mock trial activities, students not only play the roles of lawyers, judges, and parties but also experience the dual assurance of legal procedures in fact-finding and fair adjudication during role transitions. Additionally, inviting external legal advisors into classrooms or workshops, where experienced lawyers or prosecutors personally share typical cases, allows teachers and students to appreciate the unique perspective and deeper value of legal thinking in problem-solving through interaction with experts. Such diverse teaching methods not only break the limitations of legal education textbooks but also hone the judgment and communication skills of teachers and students in real-world contexts, thereby transforming abstract legal concepts into internalized behavioral norms.

The legal literacy of the teaching staff is a critical guarantee for cultivating students' legal awareness. Schools need to institutionalize and regularize teacher training at the systemic level. This not only involves arranging centralized legal training sessions but also promoting collaboration between in-house legal advisors and teaching teams to encourage teachers to consciously apply legal thinking when designing courses, organizing activities, and handling daily affairs. Through interactive, immersive legal education practices — such as role-playing in mock trials or scenario-based legal decision-making exercises — both students and teachers can continuously practice and reflect in real-life contexts, transforming legal principles from external norms into internal beliefs, fostering an atmosphere where everyone knows and abides by the law in every corner of the campus. To achieve an overall improvement in the legal literacy of both teachers and students, besides perfecting the curriculum and training system, schools should also create a strong legal culture on campus. For example, regularly publishing legal columns in school media, organizing club activities with legal themes, and conducting legal volunteer services, so that legal education is not confined to the classroom but becomes an integral part of students' extracurricular engagement and everyday experiences. By compiling and analyzing typical issues arising during consultations, the data can be categorized to inform targeted revisions of school administrative policies and guide the development of legally-informed teaching plans. In this way, legal education becomes not just one-way knowledge transmission but a dynamic process involving multiple levels and entities, ensuring that legal awareness takes root firmly in the campus and has a profound impact on future social life and career development [3].

## **6. Use Information Technology to Support the Rule of Law in Schools**

Information construction has become a critical breakthrough for vocational colleges to enhance governance efficiency. Its value is not only reflected in the optimization of processes at the technical level but also lies in providing a quantifiable and traceable implementation path for law-based school management. The smart campus system, by integrating core business data such as academic affairs, student affairs, and finance, can monitor potential risk points in real-time, such as deviations in teaching plan execution and abnormal use of funds. For example, the intelligent audit platform developed by Shenzhen Polytechnic automatically identified seven cases of abnormal research fund reimbursement in 2023, three of which were found to involve violations upon verification. This proactive early warning mechanism significantly improves regulatory efficiency. The deep application of the school management system is changing the lagging nature of traditional management models, shifting key processes like student record changes approval, teacher title evaluation and hiring, and infrastructure project bidding from offline to

online. This not only shortens processing times but also achieves full-process supervision through electronic records. This transparent operational approach not only meets the requirements of the "Provisional Regulations on the Recruitment of Personnel by Public Institutions" but also enhances faculty and staff confidence in school management.

The true value of information technology lies in breaking down information barriers and building a diversified and collaborative campus ecosystem. Some leading institutions have begun to apply blockchain technology to the comprehensive evaluation of students. Data such as reward and punishment records for each semester and social practice certificates are verified by multiple parties before being stored on the blockchain, ensuring that evaluation results are tamper-proof and traceable. The institutional opinion solicitation platform developed by Nanjing Institute of Technology allows teachers and students to comment on proposed management regulations. The revised "Student Dormitory Management Measures" in 2022 incorporated 137 effective suggestions, resulting in an 89% satisfaction rate, even regarding the previously contentious clause on electricity usage regulation. The participatory decision-making model not only implements the spirit of the "Measures for the Disclosure of Information by Higher Education Institutions" but also cultivates legal awareness among teachers and students in practice. However, information construction must proceed in tandem with institutional innovation; otherwise, it risks falling into the trap of putting old wine in new bottles. Some schools, despite purchasing advanced management software, still rely on traditional hierarchical approval processes, making online procedures even more cumbersome than their paper-based counterparts. This not only reduces administrative efficiency but also discourages staff from embracing digital governance tools, thus weakening the intended benefits of modernization. Additionally, data analysis at some institutions remains superficial, failing to delve into the underlying management issues. These phenomena remind us that technical tools can only truly empower under the guidance of scientific governance principles [4].

## 7. Conclusion

The rule of law in vocational colleges is not only a requirement for standardizing educational practices but also a crucial lever for advancing the modernization of education. It can enhance governance capabilities at the macro level and inspire legal awareness among faculty and students at the micro level. Through the synergy of systems and culture, the spirit of the rule of law can be deeply rooted on campus. This cultural-institutional integration is best realized through a closed-loop governance model that includes design, execution, feedback, and optimization. In this process, top-level design must focus on both the scientific rationality of institutional frameworks and the practical feasibility of grassroots implementation. Grassroots practices need to continuously provide feedback to test and improve these systems. This closed-loop governance model, built through "design — execution — feedback — optimization", is key to transforming the concept of governing according to the law into reality. In terms of organizational leadership, the party committee and administrative departments should take the initiative to shoulder their responsibilities, integrating governance according to the law into the overall development plan and the evaluation system for officials. This serves as a driving force to strengthen internal motivation, while broad participation from faculty and students can promptly expose and correct blind spots in system implementation. A governance structure that is both authoritative and dynamic can only be achieved through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders. More importantly, information technology and risk prevention mechanisms must work together. By leveraging data empowerment through smart campus platforms, the process of system implementation can become transparent and visible. Automatic early warning and assessment functions can help identify potential issues in advance, shifting risk management from reactive to proactive.

To ensure that vocational colleges maintain long-term governance according to law, it is essential not only to focus on the integration of current policies and practices but also



to remain highly sensitive to the legal environment and trends in vocational education. Continuously refine rules in their finer aspects, promptly introduce new concepts and technologies for empowerment, and draw on external experiences through inter-school exchanges and expert consultations. This will enable continuous innovation and optimization of systems, allowing vocational colleges to remain resilient in fierce educational competition and continuously supply society with high-quality technical and skilled talents who are law-abiding, innovative, and possess a sense of social responsibility.

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