

Analysis of Online Public Opinion Response Strategies of Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities in the Era of Melting Media Based on PEST Model

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Abstract: This paper deeply analyzes the current situation of higher vocational colleges and universities' response to online public opinion, summarizes the relevant progress and problems that higher vocational colleges and universities have already achieved in their response to online public opinion, and proposes strategies for higher vocational colleges and universities' response to online public opinion in the context of melting media in terms of the dimensions of policy, economy, society, and technology based on the PEST model, in order to provide references and practical paths for higher vocational colleges and universities to respond to online public opinion in a high degree of effectiveness.

Keywords: Higher vocational colleges, public opinion, PEST model.

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out that "online public opinion work should be taken as the top priority of propaganda and ideological work". Under the background of integrated media, the information content and value implication of online public opinion are more complicated and diversified. Students of higher vocational colleges and universities have a large base and are more active on the Internet, but their cultural foundation is relatively weak and their critical thinking ability is relatively insufficient, which poses a hidden danger to the management of online public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities. Therefore, building a network public opinion response strategy system for higher vocational colleges and universities is an inevitable requirement for higher vocational colleges and universities to cope with public opinion crises, and it is also an important link in the establishment of China's comprehensive network governance system.

2. Main Types of Network Public Opinion in Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities

"Public opinion" refers to the sum and performance of group emotions, wills, attitudes, opinions and demands held by the people of the society at a certain historical stage and in a certain social space on public affairs of their own interests or on specific events of their own concern. [1] Network public opinion refers to the centralized expression of the public's cognition, emotion, attitude and position in the specific "social space" of network platform along with the development of Internet technology.

To define network public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities, it is necessary to consider the identity of the subject of public opinion, the relevance of the information content to the institution, and the public influence of network behavior, etc. Usually, it refers to the remarks and opinions with strong influence and tendency generated by students' net names around the occurrence and development of the social and public opinions. [2] It should be particularly

noted that when individual students post content that is not directly related to the institution, it should be regarded as the scope of public opinion in society. In recent years, college and university online public opinion events have occupied a large proportion of online public opinion events. Internet public opinion in higher education institutions can be roughly divided into three major types: the behavioral norms of educational subjects, the operation of campus governance system, and the scope of social interactive responsibility.

(1) Behavioral Norms of Educational Subjects

Behavioral norms of educational subjects mainly focus on the professional ethics and behavioral norms of educational participants. In recent years, there have been frequent public opinions related to teachers, one of which is the personal behavioral norms of teachers, including misconduct in teacher-student relationships and personal life style, for example, in October 2024, a married female teacher at a vocational college in Jinhua was exposed to cheating on her students, and her husband disclosed the video of the hotel surveillance. The second is the publication of inappropriate remarks, including improper communication between teachers and students, showing off status privileges, and discriminatory remarks. For example, in October 2024, a counselor at a vocational college in Anhui made insulting remarks such as "eat more pig brains to make up for it" in the class group. The third is favoritism and academic misconduct, such as selection fraud, plagiarism of academic results, academic data forgery, etc. For example, in September 2024, a college in Southwest China was alleged to have used improper results in the process of title evaluation and there was a phenomenon of harboring.

(2) Campus governance system operation

The effective operation of the campus governance system covers multiple dimensions such as the safety of the physical environment and the effectiveness of administrative management, the core of which is to carry out refined management around the various aspects of learning and life on campus, which is specifically embodied in the safety prevention, control and organizational optimization of campus activities, and the coordination of holiday affairs and dispute resolution in practical scenarios. For example, in

April 2025, a vocational college in Guangxi broke out the incident of student registration management. After studying in school for nearly a year, many students discovered that they had not yet been granted official school registration. The incident clearly reflects the systemic loopholes in the enrollment process, transparency of information disclosure, student rights and interests protection mechanism and other key governance aspects of the college involved, exposing its serious dereliction of duty in the construction and implementation of the campus governance system. Such problems not only directly harm the rights and interests of students in education, but also negatively affect the credibility and social reputation of university governance.

(3) The scope of social interactive responsibility

It mainly involves the construction of value consensus between institutions and the public, such as the social expectation of education fairness in enrollment and admission work, and the public concern of animal protection in scientific experiments, which are sensitive areas involving social responsibility. For example, in April 2025, students of a vocational school in Shenyang collectively purchased sportswear online at the end of April, and returned it for a refund in the name of "quality problems" after using it. This incident seems to be an individual consumer behavior, but it reflects the interface between campus responsibility education and social integrity value consensus.

3. Characteristics of Online Public Opinion in Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities

The rapid development of Internet technology and the widespread popularization of social media have created convenient channels for students in higher vocational colleges to participate in public issues, enabling them to fully exercise their right to speak in online public opinion events. Network public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities has significant characteristics in terms of subject dimension, dissemination mechanism and scope of influence.

(1) Subject dimension: group complexity and emotional resonance

Student groups are the core subjects of online public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities. Nowadays, the "post-05" student group, as the "aborigines of the Internet", are the active members of the Internet platform. Compared with undergraduate students, students in higher vocational colleges have more complex educational backgrounds, family environments, media literacy and self-cognition. Some students are able to express reasonable demands based on rational thinking, facts and logical analysis. However, some students, due to their different knowledge structures and value positions, tend to be dominated by emotions, and vent their emotions based on subjective assumptions.

(2) Communication Mechanism: Multiple Participation and Fission Diffusion

The instant interaction property of social media provides technical soil for the fission spread of online public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities. Students in higher vocational colleges have grown up with the Internet, and are extremely familiar with the operation logic and communication rules of new media technologies such as short video platforms (e.g. Jittery Tone, Shutterbug), social software (WeChat, QQ), and instant messaging tools

(microblogs, campus forums), and so on, and their participation in the main body and content topics are all diversified. At the same time, the algorithmic recommendation mechanism can rely on user profiling technology, deeply analyze individual preferences through data labels, accurately match users with relevant information, and realize targeted push in the student population to further expand the influence of communication.

(3) Scope of influence: cross-circle penetration and secondary crisis

Under the current communication ecology, university network public opinion, compared with other common network public opinion, has a deeper relationship with other related things, and thus is prone to the phenomenon of pulling one hair and affecting the whole body, and its changes may even bring about unpredictable events. [4] As "vulnerable groups" in social cognition, minors and student groups, their rights and interests protection, growth environment and other issues are very likely to trigger the public's desire for protection and empathy, and the spread of public opinion is very likely to break through the circle, and derive from campus incidents to public issues of concern to the whole nation. This phenomenon of generalization of public opinion exacerbates the complexity of handling the incident, and may also lead to secondary public opinion due to excessive public concern and irrational expression. For example, emotional communication may lead to cyber violence, privacy leakage, and personality defamation of the person concerned; one-sided interpretation of the incident may trigger a crisis of public trust in education as a whole, or even evolve into stigmatization of specific groups.

4. Current Situation and Problems of Online Public Opinion Management in Higher Vocational Colleges Under PEST Framework

PEST model analysis is a macro-environmental analysis method in modern management science, which analyzes four dimensions: policy environment, economic environment, social environment, and research and technology environment. With the help of PEST analysis framework, the current situation and problems of online public opinion response of higher vocational colleges and universities in the context of integrated media can be analyzed more clearly and systematically.

(1) Current Situation of Online Public Opinion Management in Higher Vocational Colleges under the PEST Framework

Analysis of the current situation of the policy environment (P): At the national level, China has built a legal structure centered on the Cybersecurity Law, the Data Security Law, and the Personal Information Protection Law to set basic guidelines for online public opinion management in higher vocational colleges and universities. For example, the Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content explicitly require institutions to strengthen the content audit of campus forums and social media, while the Action Plan for Education Informatization 2.0 prompts higher vocational colleges and universities to monitor the dynamics of public opinion with the help of big data technology.

Analysis of the current state of the economic environment (E): There is a relative regional imbalance in the financial

input of public opinion management in higher vocational colleges and universities; in the financial guarantee system, some provinces have set aside funds for public opinion management in higher vocational colleges and universities, mainly for the purchase of professional public opinion systems, etc., which is a relatively sufficient budget, but most of the higher vocational colleges and universities still rely on the coordinated funds of the university to carry out the relevant work; at the same time, due to the positioning of the level of operation of the school and the mechanism of financial allocations, higher vocational colleges and universities have a significant disadvantage in the use of funds for public opinion management compared with undergraduate colleges and universities.

Analysis of the current situation of the social environment (S):In terms of public opinion management, the government, industry and media have relatively abundant resources, regardless of the institutions have begun to try to integrate and utilize the resources of related units. For example, some institutions share data with local governments and utilize the detection technology capability of the net information department, which significantly improves the timeliness of public opinion early warning and the accuracy of linkage disposal.

Analysis of the current situation of the technological environment (T):In the wave of digitization, the technical environment of online public opinion management in higher vocational colleges and universities is undergoing profound changes, and technology provides new means for public opinion prevention and control. Multi-platform information capture technology has been widely used, and through data interface docking, crawlers and other means, higher vocational colleges and universities are able to collect real-time information related to the university from microblogging, jitterbugging, campus forums and other channels, covering multiple scenarios such as teaching evaluation, university-enterprise cooperation dynamics, student life feedback, etc., which lays a good foundation for the "early discovery" of public opinion.

(2) Problems of Online Public Opinion Management in Higher Vocational Colleges under PEST Framework

Analysis of Policy Environment Problems (P):From the viewpoint of the integrity of the policy system, although the national level has issued macro regulations, there is a relative lack of special policy documents for the management of public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities, especially in the areas of public opinion on the integration of production and education, and the protection of students' rights and interests in the new media environment, there is a lack of detailed operational guidelines. The lag in local policy support is even more prominent, as most provinces have not included public opinion management of higher vocational colleges and universities in the scope of special policies, and the relevant requirements are scattered in documents such as education supervision, safe campus construction, etc., and there is a general lack of differentiated support measures in the central and western regions.

Analysis of economic environment problems (E):Most higher vocational colleges and universities face competitive disadvantages in the allocation of financial resources, and their public opinion management funds mainly come from the regular budgets of local finances, which are not only limited in overall scale, but also often face the pressure of allocating funds for other programs of teaching and learning, resulting

in obvious shortcomings in the updating of technological facilities and the construction of professional personnel, which objectively exacerbates the capability gap of higher vocational colleges and universities in public opinion early warning, research and judgment, and disposal.

Analysis of social environment problems (S):There are still obstacles to information sharing between departments and higher education institutions, and cross-departmental data barriers have not yet been completely broken down. Interdepartmental coordination and linkage still remains in the traditional mode of "intervention after the fact", and the relevant mechanism starts to work only in the stage of emergency response after the occurrence of an incident. This mode lacks prior risk warning of public opinion, and it is difficult to adapt to the requirements of the current rapid spread of online public opinion on the speed of governance.

Analysis of technical environment problems (T):There are obvious deficiencies in the technical support for online public opinion management in higher vocational colleges and universities. It is mainly manifested in the shortcomings in in-depth data analysis and intelligent processing of data. The technical application still remains at the level of basic monitoring, with functions covering only basic operations such as keyword search and statistics on the number of posts, while it can only realize the collection of surface information on public network platforms such as microblogs and posting bars, and lacks supervision of private social platforms, with problems such as inaccurate judgment of emotional tendency against public opinion and untraceable communication paths.

5. Research on Public Opinion Response Strategies of Higher Education Institutions

(1) Promoting the Establishment of a Sound Mechanism for Guiding Online Public Opinion

In view of the current situation of online public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional construction in three dimensions: national, local, and university. At the national level, there is an urgent need to issue targeted policy documents, such as "Measures for the Management of Online Public Opinion in Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities", to provide clear guidelines and directions for the regulation of online public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities. At the local level, relevant local rules and regulations should be formulated according to local characteristics, especially in the central and western regions, and local normative documents should be used to strengthen the guidelines for the management of public opinion in higher vocational colleges. Higher vocational colleges and universities should improve their public opinion management systems and documents, incorporate public opinion management into assessment indicators, and promote the implementation of the relevant systems.

(2) Guaranteeing financial input for public opinion management

The first task is to strengthen the stability and relevance of funding. On the one hand, the subjective departments of education should increase the financial investment in public opinion management and provide special financial support as much as possible. On the other hand, it is necessary to establish a diversified funding system, break the traditional pattern of relying solely on financial allocations, make clear

the independent subject attributes of public opinion management funding in the internal budgeting process of the school, and explicitly prohibit the funding from being crowded out by other matters such as education and teaching, infrastructure construction, and so on.

(3) Strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration

Accelerating the construction of the "before- during-after" linkage and coordination mechanism. Strengthening data sharing beforehand, focusing on building a data integration system between higher vocational colleges and universities, government departments and industrial enterprises, and building a platform for data sharing and interaction among multiple parties. During the incident, we strengthened the collaborative disposal mechanism, analyzed and studied the public opinion situation together through the emergency consultation mechanism, and quickly formulated a joint disposal plan including information release, public opinion guidance, and contradiction resolution. In the aftermath, we strengthen the summary and review process, optimize the public opinion regulation plan through cross-departmental comprehensive analysis, further improve the handling system, and transform the individual regulation experience into a long-term management mechanism.

(4) Focus on iterative upgrading and application of technology

With the help of advanced big data technology, colleges and universities can deeply mine and analyze huge network data, accurately grasp the trend of public opinion and identify current hot topics [5]. The use of big data for public opinion monitoring is still the main means for higher education institutions to realize public opinion regulation. It is necessary to focus on the iterative upgrading of the monitoring technology, strengthen the daily system maintenance, and at the same time, it can horizontally contact with other institutions to strengthen the exchange and sharing of monitoring technology. In addition, technological empowerment must still be based on the principle of "human-computer synergy", giving full play to the power of classroom teachers, counselors, student cadres, etc., and introducing knowledge related to public opinion management into the process of ideological and political education [6], so as to play the core role of educating people in colleges and universities. Strengthen the supervision of private social platforms, and improve the effectiveness of public opinion supervision by both human and technical defense.

6. Conclusion

Network public opinion in higher vocational colleges and universities is a long-term project to maintain campus stability and promote social harmony. The state and local governments as well as colleges and universities themselves should accelerate the introduction of relevant policies and supporting regulations; at the same time, it is necessary to increase the multifaceted input of funds, relying on financial support to guarantee the implementation of measures; accelerate the promotion of departmental coordination,

smooth information exchange channels, and realize joint prevention and control; focus on big data, artificial intelligence and other means, combined with manual investigation to strengthen the supervision of private platforms, and form a "human-machine coordination " precise monitoring system. Facing the dynamic evolution of network ecology and vocational education scene, higher vocational colleges and universities need to continuously optimize and adjust the measures of each link according to the actual needs, promote the public opinion management mode from "passive response and disposal" to "active risk prevention and control", and build up a public opinion management system that is in line with the environment of the times. It is necessary to promote the in-depth transformation of public opinion management mode from "passive response and disposal" to "active risk prevention and control", build up a public opinion management system in line with the environment of the times, build up a cyberspace security barrier for the high-quality development of vocational education, and create a stable and orderly new ecology of education.

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