The Collaborative Shift of Online Education and Public Opinion Governance in Private Colleges from the Perspective of Community

Zijian Xu

Taizhou Institute of Sci.&Tech., NJUST, Taizhou 225300, Jiangsu, China

Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract

The spiral evolution of information dissemination from "Centralization-Decentralization-Recentralization" has reshaped the online public opinion ecosystem, presenting dual challenges and developmental opportunities for the collaborative advancement of online education and public opinion governance in private colleges. Based on the fundamental principles of Marxism and integrating the core concepts of the "comprehensive ideological and political education" approach, this paper systematically analyzes the integration dilemmas and underlying causes of online education and public opinion governance in private colleges across four dimensions: "subject collaboration, content adaptation, mechanism linkage, and technological support." It innovatively constructs a collaborative community model for online education and public opinion governance, proposing a practical pathway featuring three-dimensional hubs of "value anchoring-precision empowerment-fission collaboration" and dual safeguards of "evaluation and incentive mechanisms-resource integration." This provides replicable theoretical references and action plans for private colleges to overcome the dilemma of fragmented "education and governance" under resource constraints and to establish a comprehensive, all-encompassing educational framework involving all members throughout the entire process.

Keywords

Community; Private colleges; Online education; Public opinion governance; Comprehensive ideological and political education

1. Problem statement: The contradiction between collaborative adaptation of education and governance from the perspective of community

At the National Education Conference, General Secretary Xi emphasized the need to "create distinctive brands of online ideological and political education and continuously expand the space and arenas for practical and online education[1]," providing clear direction for online ideological and political work in colleges and universities in the new era. The Outline of the Plan for Building China into an Education Powerhouse (2024–2035) further outlines the deployment to "promote the deep integration of ideological and political work with information technology, and create an online space and educational ecosystem conducive to the healthy growth of young people," elevating online education to a strategic level [2].

Currently, the in-depth application of generative AI and algorithmic recommendation engines has completely reconfigured the logic of information production, distribution, and consumption, resulting in core characteristics of "node reconstruction, precise adaptation, and circle-layer fission" in cyberspace. This poses profound challenges to the functional positioning, dissemination paradigms, and value-leading efficacy of online educational arenas in colleges and universities. How private colleges and universities can use the concept of a community as a guide to address the imbalance between mainstream value leadership and students' individualized needs has become a core contradiction in their online education endeavors and is also the central research topic of this paper.

1.1. The theoretical core of the evolution of communication forms and community synergy

Technological innovation serves as the core driving force behind the evolution of information communication forms, which exhibit a spiral transition from "centralization to decentralization and then to re-centralization." This evolution mutually corroborates with Marxist principles such as "productive forces determine the relations of production" and the law of "negation of negation." As an iteration of "communication productive forces," internet technology inevitably triggers fundamental changes in "communication relations," necessitating private colleges to break down barriers between "education and public sentiment management" and establish a collaborative governance model.

It should be clarified that re-centralized communication is by no means a restoration of traditional centralization, but a dialectical development based on the Marxist concept of community. Its essence lies in the re-aggregation of "new network nodes" under the dominance of algorithmic logic, based on value identification, interest connections, or trust relationships [3]. It represents a concrete manifestation of the Marxist community concept in the digital age, providing a natural arena for the synergy between online education and public opinion governance. The important discourse on the "community with a shared future in cyberspace" proposed by General Secretary Xi further clarifies the core requirement of "collaborative construction and shared governance" in the online sphere.

Table 1. The evolutionary logic of the "Triple Forms" of information dissemination driven by technology

Dissemination stage	Technological foundation	Core characteristics	Core requirements for talent cultivation in private universities
Centralized (Web 1.0)	Portal websites, static web pages	One-way dissemination, hierarchical monopoly	Efficiency-oriented one-way value transmission
Decentralized (Web 2.0)	Mobile internet, user-generated content platforms	Two-way interaction, decentralization of discourse power	Stimulating and guiding student agency within broadened educational fields
Re-centralized (Web 3.0)	Algorithmic recommendations, AI, social platforms	Node reconfiguration, precise adaptation, community fission	Low-cost construction of diverse, collaborative authoritative nodes to unify mainstream values with personalized needs

It emphasizes both the cohesion of value consensus through education and the safeguarding of cyberspace security through public opinion governance, which together constitute the core mission of network governance in private colleges and universities. This collaborative shift is not only an inevitable practice of the community concept but also a concrete embodiment of the transition of the "big ideological and political education" concept from one-way indoctrination to multidimensional collaboration, from classroom-centered to network-extended, and from closed management to open sharing.

1.2. Four-dimensional synergistic dilemmas in online education and public opinion governance in private colleges

Based on sample surveys and interviews conducted at some private colleges (independent colleges) in Jiangsu, combined with the common issues in public opinion governance in private colleges under the integrated media ecosystem, online education and public opinion governance in private colleges face a four-dimensional fusion dilemma involving "subjects, content, mechanisms, and technology," which manifests as follows:

(1) Subject synergy dilemma: Lagging cultivation of new authoritative nodes and insufficient linkage among multiple subjects. The main entities engaged in emotional cultivation work are "doubly fragmented." The official new media matrix lacks both the potential for educational communication and the capacity to respond to public sentiment. Only 28% of institutions are equipped with full-time personnel specialized in online ideological and political education combined with public sentiment governance. Moreover, 70% of department-level official accounts update less than three times a month on average, with updates primarily focusing on reprinting educational policies and failing to fulfill the function of public sentiment response. The potential of endogenous entities such as teachers, students, and alumni remains untapped, as they neither participate in the creation and dissemination of educational content nor serve as significant forces in guiding public sentiment, thereby risking the marginalization of mainstream voices. This presents a significant gap from the requirements of the "comprehensive ideological and political education" approach that emphasizes education for all, failing to establish a collaborative and cross-entity pattern of education;

(2) There is a dilemma in content adaptation: a dual lack of precision in educational content and adaptability in public sentiment response. Educational content predominantly takes the form of traditional policy interpretations and news broadcasts, lacking engaging mediums such as short videos and situational dramas that are easily relatable and shareable. Furthermore, 68% of students believe that "the content released by the school has low relevance to their own needs." Public sentiment response content, on the other hand, suffers from a "template-based" issue, often consisting of official statements that lack value guidance tailored to educational contexts, making it difficult to resolve cognitive misunderstandings in the context of compartmentalized communication. The educational and sentiment-related content are disconnected and fail to form a synergistic force, contradicting the value orientation of "comprehensive ideological and political education" for all-round education;

(3) There is a dilemma in mechanism linkage, where the rigid collaborative response and closed-loop governance mechanisms. The work of ideological and political education and public sentiment governance operates in isolation, with public sentiment monitoring often being a passive "firefighting" effort that fails to transform public sentiment hotspots into educational materials. The iteration of educational content lags behind the pace of hotspot dissemination, and departmental collaboration remains at the level of administrative directives, lacking the establishment of a coupled closed loop encompassing "public sentiment monitoring-educational transformation-guidance feedback-governance optimization." A networked

governance model has yet to be formed, making it difficult to meet the implementation requirements of "comprehensive ideological and political education" for all-process education [4];

(4) The dilemma of technological support, including the superficial application of digital tools and the lack of pathways for collaborative empowerment. 80% of colleges and universities have not established data collection and analysis mechanisms that cover both educational and public sentiment scenarios. As a result, they are unable to achieve precise delivery of educational content based on student profiles, nor can they provide early warning of public sentiment risks through data monitoring. Technological investments are mostly concentrated on the procurement of single-function tools, failing to form a collaborative closed loop of "data collection-profile construction-content adaptation-effect evaluation." Consequently, technological empowerment remains superficial and fails to fully leverage the supporting role of digital intelligence technologies in collaborative education and public sentiment management [5].

2. Causes of the dilemma: A three-dimensional deconstruction based on the fundamental principles of Marxism

Under re-centralized communication, the leap in "communication productive forces" has given rise to new forms of "communication production relations." However, private colleges and universities lag behind in terms of "collaborative productive forces in education and public sentiment management" and have rigid "collaborative production relations in education and public sentiment management," resulting in structural tensions. Based on the Marxist contradiction analysis method and considering the operational characteristics of private colleges and universities, the causes of the dilemma can be attributed to three following main factors:

(1) The contradiction between social existence and social consciousness: A disconnect between collaborative cognition and practice. The reality of a re-centralized communication ecosystem and limited resources in private colleges and universities necessitates a dual shift in the concept of education and public sentiment management towards "community collaboration" and the "great ideological and political education" concept. However, some practices still regard online education and public sentiment governance as independent "add-ons," mistakenly equating "re-centralization" with the "piling up of high-end technologies." The traditional "fragmented governance" model stands in sharp opposition to the actual needs of collaborative education and public sentiment management. This cognitive bias leads to a lack of systematic planning in education and public sentiment work, making it difficult to form a synergistic educational force;

(2) The contradiction between productive forces and relations of production: Structural mismatch between collaborative capabilities and mechanisms. Private colleges and universities lack the capabilities of new types of "collaborative productive forces," such as algorithm comprehension, node operation, and emotional cultivation transformation. Most staff members only possess single skills in education or administrative control, making it difficult to meet the technical requirements for emotional cultivation collaboration in the digital and intelligent era. Meanwhile, the "emotional cultivation relations of production" adhere to the logic of administrative control, failing to establish a new type of relationship characterized by "collaborative co-construction, value sharing, and fission-based incentives." This fails to fully activate the participation enthusiasm of subjects such as teachers and students, resulting in a vicious cycle of "inadequate capabilities-rigid mechanisms-low efficiency;"

(3) The contradiction between the economic base and the superstructure: Imbalance between resource investment and collaborative system construction. Most of the funding for private colleges and universities is allocated to "hard" areas such as teaching facilities, while the total

investment in emotional cultivation work is insufficient and structurally dispersed. 75% of the investment is concentrated on the procurement of single-function tools or emergency public opinion handling, lacking sustained investment in "soft" areas such as collaborative node cultivation, content creation, and mechanism construction. This imbalance in resource allocation makes it difficult for the emotional cultivation collaboration system to support the demands of re-centralized communication due to its weak "economic base," and it also fails to meet the practical requirements for resource integration and optimization under the concept of "great ideological and political education."

3. Path to breakthrough: Theoretical construction and practical model of an educational community

To overcome the aforementioned dilemmas, it is essential to build upon the essential attributes of community-based "collaborative co-construction and value integration," the laws of re-centralized communication, and the core concepts of "great ideological and political education." A model for a "network-based education and public opinion governance collaboration community" under re-centralized public opinion dissemination should be constructed, with its theoretical logic, core hubs, and supporting guarantees as follows.

3.1. Theoretical logic: The intrinsic alignment between the concept of community and collaborative education

The Marxist concept of community serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding the synergy between education and public sentiment cultivation. Marx explicitly stated that "the essence of man is the sum total of social relations[6]," and the core essence of a community lies in reconstructing the network of interpersonal relationships to achieve the cohesion of shared values and the integration of collective strength. This concept is inherently aligned with the evolutionary logic of re-centralized communication: the new node aggregation formed through re-centralization is essentially a reconstruction of "social relations" in cyberspace, providing pathways for the infiltration of educational values across different circles and creating conditions for precise guidance in public sentiment governance, thus serving as a natural vehicle for the synergy between education and sentiment cultivation.

The concept of a community with a shared future in cyberspace further clarifies the practical direction for the synergy between education and sentiment cultivation, while the concept of "grand ideological and political education" provides methodological guidance for the construction of a collaborative community. Both emphasize a collaborative logic that involves all members, the entire process, and all dimensions. The former focuses on security and consensus in the cyber domain, while the latter emphasizes the infiltration and shaping of educational values, jointly forming the theoretical core of the collaborative community for education and sentiment cultivation [7]. This intrinsic alignment offers a clear practical logic transformation for sentiment cultivation work in private colleges and universities: the characteristics of "node reconstruction, precise adaptation, and circle-layer fission" in re-centralized communication, the essential attributes of "collaborative co-construction and value integration" in the community, and the educational requirements of "grand ideological and political education" mutually support each other, ultimately translating into a practical path of "value anchoring-precise empowerment-fission collaboration," achieving a dialectical unity between the guidance of mainstream values and effective public sentiment governance.

3.2. Three-dimensional hub: The core practical vehicle of the community

In practice, Taizhou Institute of Science and Technology, Nanjing University of Science and Technology has built a tripartite collaborative framework for online education and public opinion governance based on its Online Ideological and Political Education Center, integrating resources from the university, local government, enterprises, and media. This framework, characterized by "anchoring mainstream values, precise empowerment through algorithms, and node-based collaborative fission," fully embodies the educational philosophy of

diverse and collaborative "Grand Ideological and Political Education." For instance:

(1) The Value Anchoring Hub: Construction of a Three-Tier Collaborative Matrix of Authoritative Nodes: By leveraging diverse platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili, a low-cost, comprehensive system of collaborative nodes for educational and emotional cultivation has been established as outlined:

(i) Level 1 nodes (official hubs) integrate new media resources from the university, its colleges, and student organizations to form an official cluster that operates under "unified coordination, content collaboration, and matrix-based communication." This cluster not only disseminates educational content but also promptly responds to public opinion;

(ii) Level 2 nodes (hubs led by key teachers and students) cultivate KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) and KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers) with dual capabilities in education and emotional cultivation, creating a synergistic effect between professional guidance and peer influence (as shown in **Table 2**);

(iii) Level 3 nodes (external collaboration hubs) integrate external resources such as renowned alumni, partner enterprises, and local mainstream media to amplify the reach of educational messages and enhance the authority of public opinion responses. This matrix breaks down barriers to collaborative efforts among different entities, providing a practical vehicle for holistic education.

(2) The Precision Empowerment Hub: A Data-Driven, Segmented Collaborative System: Supported by digital and intelligent technologies, a precise empowerment mechanism for "dual-dimensional educational and emotional cultivation" has been constructed as listed:

(i) A digital portrait of students is created based on "dual-dimensional educational and emotional cultivation" metrics. We integrate multi-source information, including data from campus social platforms, student survey data, and historical public opinion data, and employ a tagging approach to construct multi-dimensional profiles encompassing "grade-major-educational needs-public opinion concerns-content preferences." The educational needs tags include four major categories, including academic improvement, employment and entrepreneurship, emotional counseling, and rights protection, with 20 sub-tags, while the public opinion concern tags cover three major categories, campus management, academic integrity, and safety and security, with 18 sub-tags. The content preference tags encompass eight formats, such as "short videos," "long-form graphic posts," and "live interactive sessions;"

(ii) We provide targeted and collaborative content delivery. Based on these profiles, we organize professional teachers, student leaders, and others to produce tailored content, such as career planning short

Table 2. Core differences and synergies between KOLs and KOCs in the educational node matrix

Dimension	KOL	KOC
Identity & positioning	Domain authority, professional content creator (e.g., renowned teachers, experts, scholars)	Authentic user, sharer of lived experiences (e.g., outstanding peers, active student leaders)
Influence scope	Cross-community reach, large-scale radiation	Deep penetration within communities, targeted, high trust
Content characteristics	Professionally produced, systematic output	Real-life scenarios, relatable everyday expression
Collaborative role	Agenda-setting, in-depth interpretation, authoritative guidance	Evoking resonance, enabling precise infiltration and initial fission

videos with an educational orientation to address "employment anxiety" public sentiment, and graphic content combining policy interpretations with improvement commitments to address controversies over "campus services;"

(iii) We break down data silos and establish a dynamic optimization closed loop of "monitoring and feedback-precise delivery-effect evaluation-content iteration," driving continuous alignment of educational and public sentiment content with needs, and achieving comprehensive and precise education;

(3) We establish a fission-based collaborative hub, a circle-layer diffusion mechanism for coupling education and public sentiment. Based on the coupling relationship between online education and public opinion governance, we construct an integrated "incentive-transformation-consensus" mechanism, forming a complete collaborative closed loop that runs through the entire educational process: By combining algorithmic monitoring with manual inspections, we establish a hierarchical early warning model for public opinion, transforming potential public opinion risk points into proactive educational materials, achieving "pre-event prevention-value infiltration." We form a joint action team of student online commentators and educational volunteers to address hot public opinion issues, employing a combination of KOL authoritative interpretations and KOC peer guidance to simultaneously conduct public opinion guidance and educational guidance, achieving "in-event collaboration-mutual empowerment." By setting thematic issues, we transform public opinion hotspots into educational theme activities, such as conducting integrity education around the "academic misconduct" public opinion, achieving "post-event consolidation-consensus strengthening." We establish an incentive points system, linking behaviors such as producing and forwarding positive content and rational public opinion expression to awards, evaluations, and

second-classroom credits, driving the continuous fission of the synergistic effect of education and public sentiment within circle layers.

3.3. Power support: A dual support system of mechanisms and resources

The power support system serves as the core pillar for the stable operation of the community. It should be built upon the resource constraints characteristic of private colleges and universities, establishing a dual closed-loop system that "empowers through mechanisms and aggregates resources" to achieve the goal of "low-cost input and high-quality collaboration," thereby providing solid support for the collaborative emotional cultivation within the "grand ideological and political education" framework.

The scientifically oriented evaluation and incentive mechanism should break free from the limitations of traditional administrative assessments and establish a four-dimensional quantitative evaluation system that measures "nodal collaborative capacity, content adaptability, viral dissemination effectiveness, and consensus-building degree [8]." This system should refine secondary observation points (such as the frequency of updates to emotional cultivation content at nodes, the timeliness of public opinion responses, content forwarding volume, and student satisfaction) to enhance operability. Incentives should be implemented hierarchically for different entities: teachers' collaborative emotional cultivation achievements should be directly linked to their professional title evaluations and performance assessments; students participating in collaborative practices can accumulate "emotional cultivation collaboration points" that can be redeemed for benefits such as access to academic lectures and practical activity qualifications; outstanding collaborative teams receive financial support and resource prioritization. Meanwhile, dynamic optimization of the mechanism is achieved through "monthly monitoring + quarterly evaluations + annual reviews," fully activating the enthusiasm of all participants.

The efficient and intensive resource integration mechanism closely aligns with the demands of private colleges and universities for "low cost and high efficiency," constructing a resource ecosystem that "taps

internal potential and leverages external collaboration." At the on-campus level, we should break down the resource barriers among departments such as the Academic Affairs Office, Student Affairs Office, Network Information Center, and Propaganda Department. We should establish a collaborative resource scheduling platform and a material sharing library for emotional education, integrate curriculum resources, faculty strength, new media channels, etc., and activate the endogenous power of teachers and students.

We should support the construction of collaborative innovation studios for emotional education through a "project-based" approach. At the off-campus level, we should deepen cooperation between schools, enterprises, and local governments, introduce lightweight collaborative tools for emotional education (such as low-cost open-source monitoring systems and short video production tools), and leverage resources from corporate mentors. We should collaborate with local government media, industry experts, and renowned alumni to amplify the collaborative voice, optimize the allocation of funds, focus on node cultivation, content creation, and technological upgrades, and achieve "small investments leveraging large collaborative efficiencies," fully meeting the practical needs of resource integration and optimization for "grand ideology and politics" education.

The evaluation and incentive mechanism and the resource integration mechanism do not operate in isolation but form a virtuous cycle of "incentives promoting participation, resources strengthening support, and collaboration enhancing efficiency." The former activates the endogenous motivation of collaborative entities at all levels through precise incentives, while the latter addresses the issue of insufficient supply through optimal resource allocation. Together, they support the continuous iteration of the collaborative community for emotional education, aligning with the laws of decentralized communication and the resource constraints of private colleges. They provide solid support for the implementation of the three-dimensional hub, driving the work of emotional education from "fragmented and disjointed" to "systematic and collaborative," and achieving the goal of all-round education for "grand ideology and politics" involving all members throughout the entire process.

4. Conclusion and outlook

Re-centralized communication is an inevitable outcome driven by the development of productivity, which leads to the restructuring of communication relationships. The shift towards a community approach in online education and public opinion governance in private colleges and universities represents a concrete application of Marxist community thought and the concept of "grand ideological and political education" in the cyberspace domain. The community model, through its "three-dimensional hub + dual safeguard" structure, resolves the core contradictions of "resource constraints" and "the alignment of education and public opinion coordination" in private colleges and universities. Theoretically, it constructs an analytical framework for the collaborative community of education and public opinion in private colleges and universities. Practically, it offers a replicable, low-cost pathway, providing a systematic solution to enhance the effectiveness of online education and public opinion governance capabilities in private colleges and universities.

Looking ahead, research and practice can be deepened in three areas as follows:

(1) Further explore lightweight application scenarios of artificial intelligence, such as leveraging low-cost AI tools for synchronous monitoring of education and public opinion data, intelligent content generation, and preliminary responses to public opinion, thereby lowering the threshold for collaboration and fully harnessing the empowering advantages of digital intelligence technologies [9];

(2) Promote the establishment of a collaborative alliance for education and public opinion among regional private colleges and universities, integrating high-quality cross-school resources (such as shared material libraries, joint cultivation nodes, and collaborative handling of cross-school public opinion) to create economies of scale and synergistic effects, addressing the challenge of insufficient resources at individual institutions;

(3) Optimize the comprehensive evaluation system by incorporating long-term tracking of students' ideological values and assessment of the

effectiveness of public opinion risk prevention and control, deeply linking the outcomes of collaborative education and public opinion efforts with the achievements of moral education, enhancing the scientific rigor and long-term effectiveness of collaborative governance, and providing stronger support for safeguarding ideological security and fostering a harmonious campus environment in private colleges and universities.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Xi J, 2025, Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume V), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 232–233.

[2] Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2025, Outline of the Plan for Building China into a Powerful Country in Education (2024–2035), January 10, 2025.

[3] Shen G, Yi R, 2024, From Network Society to Platform Society—The Decentralization and Recentralization of Communication Structure. Exploration and Free Views, (3): 156–160.

[4] Yu H, 2025, A Study on Strategies of Integrating Ideological and Political Education into the Governance of Online Public Opinion in Universities. Journal of News Research, 16(20): 1278–133.

[5] An J, 2025, An Analysis of Digital Empowerment in the Integration of Ideological and Political Education Across Universities, Secondary, and Primary Schools. Ideological and Political Work Research, (09): 28–29.

[6] Marx, Engels, 2012, Selected Works of Marx and Engels (Volumes 1–4). Beijing: People's Publishing House.

[7] Zhuang R, 2025, Building a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace and Writing a New Chapter for a Better Digital and Intelligent Future. China Cyberspace, (10): 14–17.

[8] Xue G, 2025, Scientifically Constructing a Comprehensive Media Evaluation System to Effectively Enhance the "Four Forces" of News Communication. News Front, (04): 19–22.

[9] The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2025, Opinions on Deepening the Implementation of the "Artificial Intelligence+" Initiative. August 27, 2025.