

Research on the Reconstruction of Student Management Paradigms and Risk Governance in Universities under the Perspective of Digital Empowerment

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Abstract: In the era of deepening educational digitalization strategies, the internet has transcended its role as a mere technological tool, fully integrating into and profoundly reshaping the landscape and ecosystem of university student management. Confronted with evolving lifestyles among digital natives, traditional management paradigms rooted in bureaucracy and empiricism have suffered structural failures. This paper examines the inherent tensions in contemporary university student management through the lens of technological integration and institutional transformation, focusing on bureaucratic inertia, data silos, and latent risk mitigation. Particularly, it conducts theoretical analysis of the underlying mechanisms driving college students' involvement in emerging cybercrimes within the context of pervasive cyberspace, revealing how black-and-gray economic chains exploit youth populations through targeted exploitation. Based on these findings, the study advocates for a paradigm shift in university student management, moving beyond instrumental rationality toward communicative rationality, from fragmented governance to holistic smart governance, and from passive response to proactive defense, providing a theoretically robust and practically actionable framework to enhance modern university governance capabilities.

Keywords: Internet plus; Student management; Digital empowerment

Online publication: March 26, 2026

1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the comprehensive implementation of education digitalization strategies, higher education is undergoing irreversible and profound transformations. For university student management, the widespread adoption of the internet signifies not only a shift in operational platforms but also a systemic restructuring of governance power structures, interaction patterns among stakeholders, and risk evolution mechanisms. As typical digital natives, contemporary college students rely heavily on digital spaces for their cognitive frameworks, social networks, and value systems. However, current university management practices reveal a persistent paradox: while substantial investments are made in smart campus platforms, management philosophies remain entrenched in outdated approaches, accompanied by frequent underlying risks. This intense friction between technological empowerment and

institutional inertia poses severe challenges to traditional student management paradigms. Therefore, abandoning a purely instrumentalist technological perspective and re-examining the transformation of university student management from a paradigm-reconstruction perspective is not only essential for overcoming current management dilemmas but also a fundamental requirement for returning to the core mission of education, cultivating virtue and nurturing talent ^[1].

2. Technical integration and the profound restructuring of student management environments

To comprehend the transformation of student management in the new era, the primary prerequisite is to clarify how digital technologies deconstruct and reshape traditional management frameworks. This restructuring does not merely involve replacing offline practices with online alternatives; rather, it touches upon the fundamental logic of management activities and the mechanisms of power dynamics.

2.1. The flattening of power structures and the transfer of discourse power

Traditional university student management is deeply rooted in bureaucratic organizational structures, relying on the vertical chain of school, college, counselor, and class levels to facilitate information dissemination and behavioral regulation. Within this framework, administrators hold absolute informational dominance and discourse control, while students remain passive recipients. However, the integration of the internet and its decentralized technological logic have powerfully dismantled this pyramid-shaped power structure. The widespread use of social media and instant messaging tools has completely eliminated temporal and spatial barriers in information flow, reducing the time lag between information acquisition for both faculty and students to nearly zero. Administrators no longer possess inherent informational advantages, and traditional one-way indoctrination-based education proves ineffective when confronted with the vast volume of fragmented online information. This shift toward information symmetry essentially flattens the power dynamics between managers and students while transferring discourse authority, leaving traditional authoritative management systems facing a legitimacy crisis. Students are no longer merely objects of management but also producers and disseminators of online information. They can rapidly mobilize through digital platforms to form public opinion forces that challenge institutional governance, compelling administrators to transition from authoritative commanders issuing top-down directives to facilitators of equal dialogue ^[2].

2.2. Digitalization of lifestyle and the weakening of physical classrooms

Meanwhile, college students' lifestyles have undergone a fundamental shift, from physical aggregation to digital nomadism. Contemporary students increasingly rely on virtual cyberspace for social interactions, emotional expression, and even identity formation. Traditional physical classrooms, as the most basic unit of academic management, are witnessing a rapid erosion of their cohesion and boundaries. In contrast, new digital communities formed among students through geographical proximity and shared interests often exhibit stronger sense of belonging and mobilization capabilities. This atomized living pattern has rendered traditional behavioral constraints based on physical presence increasingly ineffective. Students' rapid movement between different communities and frequent identity transitions make it difficult for administrators to effectively organize and integrate them through conventional class structures, resulting in unprecedented mobility among managed individuals. Traditional educational formats like class meetings and Youth League activities, which depend on physical gatherings, have lost significant appeal. Students now devote far more time and energy to cyberspace than to physical classrooms, leading to the hollowing out of real-world educational environments ^[3].

2.3. Datafication of management intermediaries and penetration of algorithmic logic

The more profound impact stems from digital technology's panoramic monitoring capability, which transforms all student activities, from class attendance and library borrowing to dining consumption patterns, into storable and computable

data streams. This evolution elevates administrative frameworks from traditional institutional frameworks to algorithmic models, offering unprecedented potential for precise student behavior analysis while simultaneously posing risks of technological alienation that reduces complex human nature to cold data. When students' emotional states are reduced to fluctuations in behavioral metrics and interpersonal interactions simplified into node connections within social graphs, management practices risk being entirely dominated by mathematical logic. The warmth of education and humanistic care become easily eroded by rigid algorithmic operations. Administrators' decision-making shifts from value-driven educational priorities to tool-oriented efficiency metrics, emphasizing visualized performance indicators and zero tolerance for risks, thereby inadvertently neglecting the complexity and developmental nature of students as living individuals ^[4].

3. The intrinsic tension between traditional management models and digital survival

The collision between technological logic and managerial logic inevitably leads to paradigm conflicts. The numerous challenges currently identified in university student management practices essentially reflect the inherent tension between traditional industrial-era management models and modern digital lifestyles ^[5].

3.1. The deep contradiction between bureaucratic inertia and network fluidity

The long-standing fragmented and multi-headed management system in universities prioritizes established order and controllable processes. Yet the internet endows college students with remarkable mobility and cross-boundary capabilities. Students' ideological trends and behavioral patterns rapidly shift across different online platforms and temporal contexts, exhibiting pronounced fragmentation and non-linear characteristics. Confronted with this fluidity, some university administrators remain entrenched in bureaucratic inertia, attempting to regulate dynamic digital behaviors through rigid approval procedures and inflexible evaluation metrics. This contradiction manifests as formalistic digital empowerment in practice: administrators obsess over developing various applications and creating complex check-in systems, effectively transforming cyberspace into surveillance tools and data-tracing platforms for extracurricular activities. Such pseudo-innovations, focusing solely on technical interfaces while neglecting the internet's spirit of openness and sharing, not only fail to enhance management efficiency but also exacerbate student resistance, creating a severe disconnect between online administration and offline educational practices. Consequently, administrative efforts become trapped in a cycle of excessive competition. Counselors are bogged down by paperwork and check-in records, reduced to mere data transmitters rather than attentive observers of students' profound ideological dynamics and psychological needs ^[6,7].

3.2. The disconnection between experience-dominated and data-driven governance

Amid the wave of digital transformation, the vast majority of universities have accumulated massive student data, yet remain trapped in a digital poverty paradox characterized by data abundance without meaningful insights. This stems from a profound disconnect between traditional experience-driven decision-making models and the demands of modern data-driven governance. The absence of a cross-departmental data platform and integrated underlying data logic has resulted in severely fragmented data silos across systems managing student affairs, academic administration, logistics, and security. Functional departments often develop data systems tailored to their operational needs, with inconsistent standards and closed interfaces hindering data interoperability. Counselors still heavily rely on personal intuition and limited offline observations when conducting comprehensive student assessments. Confronted with complex data reports, frontline counselors, lacking systematic data literacy training, typically only perform basic data entry tasks, unable to extract high-dimensional insights with early-warning value from abnormal consumption patterns or sudden fluctuations. This disconnect severely diminishes the predictive and proactive value of big data, leaving student management stuck in a reactive "firefighting" phase where substantial IT investments fail to translate into tangible governance effectiveness despite minimal added value from data assets ^[8].

3.3. Structural blind spots in dominant discipline and implicit risk prevention

Traditional student management primarily focuses on quantifiable and easily assessable indicators such as attendance rates, disciplinary violation rates, and exam pass rates, which form the safety baseline of conventional governance. However, in the internet era, substantive risks threatening student development often lurk in the implicit depths of cyberspace. While students may behave well and comply with rules in physical campus settings, their virtual identities online may operate on the fringes of law and morality. The traditional disciplinary mechanisms based on observable physical behaviors inevitably fall into blind spots when confronting these latent risks that transcend physical and digital boundaries. The significant time lag between outdated management approaches and the real-time spread of cyber risks exposes the extreme vulnerability of security defenses in the post-truth era. This structural blind spot forces administrators to respond hastily only after crises erupt, making it difficult to prevent issues before they arise. Particularly when students' online behaviors diverge from their real-world identities, institutional oversight becomes ineffective, creating management vacuums.

4. Student behavior alienation and security crisis in the context of cyberspace generalization

Before delving into transformation pathways, it is imperative to confront the derivative risks posed by the internet to students. This constitutes not merely a management issue but a significant social concern pertaining to the healthy development of young students, necessitating examination within broader social frameworks and the logic of capital operations.

4.1. The instrumentalization of college students' cybercrime under the capital logic of black and gray industries

In recent years, the phenomenon of college students becoming accomplices in new forms of cybercrime has surged dramatically. This cannot be simply attributed to weak legal awareness; it reveals the precise exploitation of youth vulnerabilities by the capital-driven logic of the cybercrime ecosystem. Under the influence of consumerist ideologies online, many students develop tendencies toward advanced consumption and material competition. Cybercriminal gangs have keenly captured this psychology, luring students with promises of easy part-time earnings through targeted advertising campaigns. More covertly, these gangs have developed highly professional brainwashing tactics and exploitation mechanisms. They deliberately downplay the causal link between financial transactions (bank cards, phone cards) and criminal activities like fraud or murder, framing credit breaches as risk-free technical support. By exploiting students' limited social experience and lack of understanding of cybercrime operations, they lure them into so-called "score-running" jobs. While students lack explicit criminal intent, they objectively commit cybercrime assistance offenses. This instrumentalization of students in cybercrime fundamentally challenges traditional campus security frameworks, rendering superficial legal education through leaflets and class meetings ineffective. Students might transform from victims into accomplice's unawareness, as their agency completely subjugated by capitalist logic. The refined division of labor within cybercrime networks confines students to minor roles, leading to severe moral numbness and loss of awareness regarding criminal nature ^[9].

4.2. Ideological polarization and information cocoons under the algorithmic recommendation mechanism

The internet not only increases the risk of economic crimes but also profoundly reshapes the mental landscape of college students. The algorithmic recommendation systems widely adopted by commercial social media platforms operate on the principle of catering to users' preferences to gain their attention and engagement time. This technological mechanism directly exacerbates the information bubble effect on campuses. Prolonged immersion in algorithmically curated information streams deprives students of exposure to diverse viewpoints, fostering polarization around specific issues. During social crises, algorithms prioritize emotionally charged and extreme content to maximize traffic, making socially inexperienced students vulnerable to irrational emotional resonance. When such sentiments spread to physical

campuses, they can trigger irrational online public opinion storms or even mass incidents. Algorithms subtly manipulate students' cognitive frameworks, undermining the guiding role of ideological education in universities and jeopardizing the dissemination of mainstream values through algorithmic logic. Within the comfort zones woven by algorithms, students gradually lose their capacity for independent and critical thinking, becoming mere appendages of algorithmic power.

4.3. The psychological isolation and identity crisis behind the prosperity of virtual interaction

Meanwhile, the prosperity of virtual interactions masks the inadequacy of real-world social support systems. Some students navigate online social settings effortlessly yet face severe social barriers in reality, creating a distorted state where digital addiction coexists with psychological isolation. The anonymity and uninhibited nature of cyberspace allow students to effortlessly craft perfect virtual personas, yet this often exacerbates their anxiety about accepting their authentic selves. When encountering academic or emotional setbacks, they frequently avoid confiding in teachers or peers, instead seeking solace in virtual spaces. However, virtual relationships are inherently fragile and transient, failing to provide deep emotional support. This highly concealed psychological crisis, lacking tangible behavioral manifestations, often erupts abruptly when emotional stress reaches critical levels. Traditional psychological assessment tools struggle with deception detection, while offline grid-based screening fails to penetrate students' closed-off inner worlds, posing significant challenges to conventional crisis identification and intervention mechanisms. The rupture between virtual and real self-identities plunges some students into profound existential anxiety, increasing the unpredictability of campus psychological crisis interventions ^[10].

5. Practical approaches to reconstructing the management paradigm for university students

Faced with profound paradigm conflicts and complex derivative risks, university student management must abandon piecemeal, incremental adjustments and instead adopt a systematic restructuring approach driven by digital empowerment and aimed at the holistic development of individuals.

5.1. The return to interpersonal rationality beyond instrumental rationality and the construction of a network-based ideological and political space

The key to overcoming bureaucratic inertia and technological formalism lies in reshaping the values of management philosophy. University administrators must shift from the instrumental rationality that views the internet merely as a control tool to the communicative rationality advocated by Habermas. This entails acknowledging and respecting students' autonomous status in cyberspace, and interpreting management processes as communicative practices based on equal dialogue and shared meaning between faculty and students. In practice, universities should redefine the boundaries between online ideological education and daily administration, abandoning simplistic measures like post deletion or account suspension in favor of fostering an inclusive and critical campus digital ecosystem. They must courageously address students' intellectual dilemmas by creating platforms for rational dialogue in cyberspace, clarifying facts through debate and reaching consensus via negotiation. By supporting high-quality campus digital media platforms, mainstream values can be transformed into culturally resonant content that subtly guides values. Counselors should proactively engage with student-dominated online communities as equal participants, influencing values through interaction rather than through authoritative preaching. Only when management shifts from top-down one-way discipline to intersubjective, equal-level engagement can students' digital resistance be effectively mitigated, turning the internet into a space for moral cultivation and talent development.

5.2. Cross-departmental collaborative governance and algorithmic ethical framework to break down data barriers

To overcome the challenges of data silos and experience-driven decision-making, it is essential to advance comprehensive

intelligent governance at the institutional and systemic level. Universities must break down departmental self-interest barriers and establish a university-wide student big data platform. This platform should not merely aggregate data but achieve deep integration of multi-source heterogeneous data under unified standards and security ethics. Clear data ownership relationships must be defined, along with a negative list system for data sharing, to eliminate departmental data silos. Leveraging this platform, universities should develop a comprehensive digital student profile system that integrates both explicit academic performance data and latent behavioral patterns identified through machine learning algorithms. For instance, by analyzing student spending patterns, late-night access anomaly records, smart card usage irregularities, and device login behaviors, a multi-dimensional crisis early-warning model can be constructed. Concurrently, stringent algorithmic ethics protocols must be established to prevent data misuse and privacy breaches. Data collection and application must adhere to the principle of minimal necessity and informed consent, ensuring algorithmic alerts serve solely as guidance for counselors to provide humanistic support and conduct in-depth interviews, rather than as direct disciplinary grounds. This agile governance mechanism, combining situational awareness, intelligent early warnings, offline verification, and closed-loop feedback, marks a fundamental shift from empirical assumptions to data-driven insights, extending management oversight to the micro-level of emerging risks.

5.3. Innovation in legal education models that cross virtual and real boundaries, and the school-police joint prevention mechanism

To address the severe challenges posed by emerging cybercrimes, universities must proactively strengthen their security defenses by establishing a comprehensive, penetrative active defense system. In legal education, it is essential to abandon impractical rote memorization of statutes in favor of experiential learning grounded in real-world scenarios. By incorporating authentic cases solved by public security anti-fraud departments, including detailed analyses of the operational networks behind cybercrime syndicates such as “Cannong Cainong”, “Pao Fen Ke” and “Shui Fang”, students can gain a clear understanding of the severe consequences of personal information disclosure, dispelling misconceptions about “the law does not punish the many” and fluke mindset. Legal education should be integrated into core freshman orientation programs and sustained throughout the university experience, utilizing virtual reality technology to simulate fraud scenarios for immersive learning. For risk mitigation, universities must transcend campus boundaries by establishing deep collaborative networks involving universities, police, and enterprises. Under strict compliance with legal standards and student privacy protections, data interfaces with anti-fraud big-data platforms should be explored to monitor abnormal transactions and roaming activities of student-linked bank and phone cards. Upon detecting high-risk fraud signals, joint university-police intervention protocols must be activated to intercept criminal activities before execution. Additionally, cybersecurity measures should be closely aligned with financial aid programs: high-quality on-campus work-study opportunities can disrupt profit-driven schemes targeting underprivileged students, eliminating criminal motivations at the source and building a robust firewall against cybercrime infiltration.

5.4. Professional reformation of the counselor team under the guidance of digital leadership

Even the most advanced technologies and mechanisms ultimately depend on human implementation. As the “last mile” in student management, the digital literacy of counselors directly determines the success of educational transformation. It is imperative to redefine counselors’ roles in the digital age, transitioning them from technical executioners to educational experts with digital leadership capabilities. Universities should establish a systematic, tiered framework for enhancing counselors’ digital literacy, focusing not only on technical skills like new media operations and data analysis but also on cultivating their ethical judgment and public opinion management abilities. Crucially, evaluation metrics must be optimized to reduce counselors’ workload by eliminating mechanical data entry tasks that can be automated through robotic processes, freeing them from administrative burdens. Performance evaluations should incorporate indicators such as outcomes in online ideological education and early warning systems to motivate counselors to embrace new technologies. Only by granting counselors sufficient time and resources to conduct heartfelt conversations and face-to-face

interactions using big data insights can we achieve a seamless integration of precise data and compassionate education, ensuring technology serves students' holistic development under human guidance. Counselors should serve as bridges connecting cold data with living students, leveraging educational wisdom to bridge management gaps caused by the digital divide.

6. Conclusion

The transformation of university student management in the digital age is far more than a simple technological upgrade, it represents a profound educational paradigm revolution that touches the very essence of education. In this uncertain digital era, while technology undoubtedly equips us with risk-sensing capabilities, it can never replace the compassionate hearts of educators. Confronted with bureaucratic inertia hindering progress, latent risks, and concerns about digital alienation, university student management must remain committed to its original mission of fostering moral integrity and nurturing talent. It should embrace technology rationally and guide algorithms with humanistic principles. Only by redefining values to restore communicative rationality, restructuring mechanisms to achieve holistic governance, addressing risks to demonstrate educational responsibility, and empowering individuals to enhance digital literacy can universities navigate the digital wave effectively, transforming cyber-era challenges into powerful momentum for cultivating new generations capable of shouldering the nation's rejuvenation. Looking ahead, university student management must consistently prioritize a people-centered approach, safeguarding the soul of education amidst digital transformation, thereby delivering a satisfactory response to the challenges of our era in the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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