

The Evolutionary Mechanism and Guidance of Case Generalization in Education-Related Public Opinion in Shaanxi

Haibao Zhan*

School of Journalism and Communication, Northwest University of Political Science and Law, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China

**Corresponding Author*

Abstract: In the era of big data, public opinion on education frequently follows an extraordinary pattern: a single, locally contained incident is extracted from its original context and then, within a very short time, transformed into a broad denunciation of educational inequality, social mobility and institutional trust. At the same time, this process of case generalisation is both very damaging and very feasible for the development of education-related public opinion. In short, it is qualitative rather than quantitative; a particular fact is abstracted and extrapolated into a problem that carries a general argument about values, which is a leap in kind rather than an extension in scope. Taking the transition from case to issue as the object of analysis, this paper puts forward a four-stage generative chain of triggering, symbolization, consensus formation and crystallization and migration to explain the internal logic of case generalization in Shaanxi, and places this logic within the structural conditions specific to the province, including the concentration of high-quality educational resources, urban-rural and regional disparities, the close connection between education and housing, and frequent changes in enrollment policies. Based on the above, a set of guidance mechanisms has been constructed to interrupt the chain of generalisation, and it is proposed that the focus of guidance should shift from controlling events to regulating mechanisms, and from clarifying facts to addressing anxieties beneath them; multi-actor coordination will be employed to close the loop of monitoring, early warning and response, while paying attention to the limits and risks of intervention.

Keywords: Education-Related Public Opinion; Case Generalization; Evolutionary

Mechanism; Public Opinion Guidance; Collaborative Governance

1. Introduction

1.1 Case Generalisation and Its Governance Risk

Education is at the centre of social mobility and the maintenance of a fair social order; thus, it affects people's long-term expectations and the fortunes of generations in every family. Centrality is a type of heightened sensitivity and emotional impact for education-related public opinion compared with other types of public opinion. In the era of big data, platform-based communication can quickly take a specific educational incident out of its original context and present it as a general problem of educational inequality, deep-seated issues of social class, and a loss of institutional trust. Lippmann long ago pointed out that the public's perception of the outside world is not based on direct experience but on the pictures we have built in our minds [1], and in a platform environment, the creation and dissemination of these pictures have become both faster and more emotionally charged. Case generalisation is not new work. Sociological studies of moral panics have long shown that a particular event can be expanded into a sense of threat to the entire social order [2]. What platformisation and big data have changed is the speed, the scope and the visibility of that amplification.

Generalisation has an inherent governance risk in the area of education. Once a concrete case is viewed as a symptom of the problem in the entire system, the public's focus shifts from whether the facts are true to whether the institution is fair, and a factual dispute that could be settled in writing turns into a dispute over values. Clarifying the facts no longer calms the anger; instead, there is now a governance problem. Under the conditions of a risk society

[3], education is viewed as one of the ways to reduce uncertainty and ensure intergenerational mobility; thus, any incident that may damage fairness can cause widespread structural anxiety, and the case itself often becomes a manifestation of that anxiety rather than its full cause.

1.2 From Stages to Mechanisms

Most of the previous studies have focused on either the life cycle of problems or emotional mobilization and have failed to provide a mechanism-level explanation for how a single-case problem escalates into a system-wide problem. Recently, Chinese scholars have used life-cycle and system-dynamics models to study the evolution of online public opinion [4], and through qualitative-comparative analysis, have begun to identify configurations of conditions that lead to the generation of such opinion [5]; however, these studies trace the speed of an issue's rise and fall or the reasons for its intensity, rather than the qualitative leap that elevates a single case to a systemic problem. The Stage of Evolution and the Mechanism of Evolution are related but different problems. The first asks what form public opinion takes at a particular time, and the second asks how and through what steps a case is raised as an issue. The former has received more attention; the latter has not been studied systematically. Big Data [6] provides both the conditions for generalisation and observable signals of assessment, but without a clear understanding of the internal logic of generalisation, a large amount of data cannot be turned into effective judgment and guidance.

1.3 Shaanxi as a Reference Area and the Starting Point of this Study

The way to be taken here is to treat the transition from case to issue as the object of study in itself, to build a generative chain consisting of triggering, symbolization, consensus formation and crystallization and migration, and to ground that chain in the structural conditions specific to Shaanxi. Such a way explains the logic of case generalisation at a general level and, at a concrete level, identifies the soil in which education-related public opinion in Shaanxi is particularly prone to generalisation, thus providing a foundation for guidance that is differentiated by stage and by link in the chain. Shaanxi is a typical case. Under the pattern of development led by the province-capital, high-

quality basic education resources across the province are concentrated in the provincial capital, and educational gaps exist between the capital and other prefectures, between the Guanzhong Plain and the southern and northern areas of the province, and between urban and rural areas. As the population continues to concentrate in the capital at an increasing rate, concerns about the supply of school places, the drawing of catchment areas, and admission policies are becoming more pressing there. Access to educational resources is tied to where one lives and the housing market, so education is naturally linked with anxiety over property and class; as a major province for the college entrance examination and higher education, Shaanxi has drawn the attention of the public to the fairness of admission. Convergence of the above structural conditions gives educational cases in Shaanxi a higher propensity for generalisation and makes the province an ideal observation ground for case generalisation. Because the subject is sensitive, this article refers to specific incidents in a deliberately general way and does not take any individual case as its subject; instead, it works speculatively to explore the mechanism by which a case becomes an issue, and on this basis, it designs paths of guidance for dealing with over-generalisation. Big Data has been used as a research environment and assessment tools, but it has not been collected by the researchers themselves.

2. From Case to Issue

2.1 Generalisation vs. Diffusion

A case is a specific fact with a definite location in time and space; an issue is a unit of public contention that has been detached from these boundaries and can be invoked repeatedly. The contents of case generalisation are to transform a specific fact into a general statement by abstracting and extrapolating its meaning; this statement then presents a value problem. To learn about generalisation, we first need to know how meaning is built, spread and fixed.

Generalisation is not the same as spreading in the usual sense. Diffusion is the spread of the same information among a larger number of people, an increase in quantity; generalisation is the abstraction of the meaning of that information and its extension to a general problem, a leap in quality. The two usually occur

together, diffusion provides scale and generalisation offers direction, but only a leap in quality can make a case a systemic problem. The way to achieve generalisation is to explore how meaning has been altered, rather than to increase the scale.

2.2 Why Education Issues Generalise

Education problems are prone to generalisation by their own nature. As education is closely related to fairness, class and intergenerational mobility, the public often views any specific case in education as a test of the fairness of the social order, and thus easily gives that case an exaggerated sense of importance. Research on agenda-setting has shown that the media influence not only what the public thinks about, but also how the public thinks; that is to say, it transfers the salience of issues and their attributes into public awareness [7]. In a platform environment, the production of salience is no longer the exclusive domain of professional media; numerous users' forwarding and commentary collectively increase the profile of an issue, and after a particular attribute of a case is repeatedly emphasized, it may become more prominent than the event itself and attract public attention.

Framing Theory explains how to expand meaning. Goffman pointed out that people use frames to organise their experiences and give meaning to events [8], and Entman further specified that a frame is the selection and salience of certain parts of perceived reality; it is the chosen and emphasized parts that determine how an event is understood [9]. Once a case falls under the category of educational injustice or class entrenchment, its particular circumstances fade away, and the general judgment contained in that category becomes what is circulated. The strength of a frame is its ability to gather unrelated cases under a single narrative, thus verifying and triggering each other, and dispersed events are woven into a continuous story that points to an institution.

Fairness serves as the general story that offers an extraordinary unifying force for education, and almost every particular case can be classified as either fair or unfair. When the information of an event is lacking and its reasons are unknown, the public will often fill in these gaps with existing narratives of unfairness and interpret ambiguous details as evidence of institutional bias. The more ambiguous the information, the stronger

the explanatory pull of the existing frame, and thus a case can be quickly assimilated into a familiar narrative even in the face of uncertainty; generalisation accelerates as attribution is simplified.

2.3 The Affective Engine of Generalisation

The Primary Cause of Generalisation is Emotion. The idea of moral shock in the study of social movements is that strong moral indignation can motivate strangers to join a movement even without prior social connections, and that highly condensed symbols are the most effective forms of moral shock [10]. Emotional contagion can spread feelings of indignation and anxiety rapidly through social and platform networks [11], so that one does not need to have experienced the event directly to be affected by it through shared emotions. Papacharissi's affective publics are precisely publics that have been bound together by shared emotion rather than by shared facts [12]; people gather around a case not because they agree on what happened, but because they feel similarly about their own circumstances. The general anxiety parents and prospective parents have in education serves as the foundation for the formation of this affective public.

2.4 Memory, Opinion Climate and the Platform

The phenomenon of a case being expanded into a general threat occurred in the era of mass media as a moral panic, where a particular group or event was portrayed as a threat to social values and thus sparked widespread public outcry out of proportion to the actual circumstances [2]. Platform Conditions have changed the form of this process. The classic moral panic relied on gatekeeping and the dissemination by mass media; now, in a decentralized platform environment, there is no longer a single gatekeeper for amplification; thus, generalization is faster and more widespread, and it is harder to control from above, so the conversion of cases into issues occurs more frequently and unpredictably.

Repetition of the same issue is due to memory. Halbwachs believed that memory is constantly being rebuilt in the social sphere [13]; past occurrences of a similar problem become part of collective memory and are remembered when a new case arises, thus achieving generalization across time by providing another example of the

old framework. At the same time, the climate of opinion described by the spiral of silence causes those who hold dissenting views to fall silent out of fear of isolation [14]; thus, it strengthens the apparent consensus around a particular emotional judgment, reduces voices of doubt and dissent, and allows generalization to occur rapidly in a seemingly unanimous climate of opinion.

Platform communication promotes all the above mechanisms. Content that can arouse strong emotions is more likely to be shared [15], and often the drive for transmission is emotion rather than the utility of information. The logic of connective action, based on personalised frames, enables large-scale mobilisation without formal organisation [16]; individuals express their concern about a single issue in their own way, and countless personalised expressions converge into a wave of opinion that is decentralised yet highly coordinated, so the absence of organisation does not reduce the momentum of mobilisation but lowers the threshold for participation.

2.5 Dimensions and Observable Signals

Generalisation of cases occurs simultaneously in several ways. At the level of the problem, communication has shifted from a particular incident to a general issue, and the subject of discussion is no longer a single case but an entire category. In terms of the actor dimension, participation extends from those directly involved to a wide public of onlookers and potential stakeholders, and watching becomes involvement. In space, a problem gradually spreads from a small area to a larger one and may even cover multiple regions; thus, a local incident gains a translocal connotation. Over time, a single event will become a recurring problem and will occur repeatedly at certain times. At the level of attribution, the explanation for contingent individual causes is replaced by an indictment of structure and institution, and the case is regarded as an unavoidable result of the system. The five dimensions are intertwined with each other and work together to form the whole of generalisation.

Big Data offers observable signals of generalisation. The shift of keywords from specific references to abstractions such as fairness, inversion and class, the simultaneous spread of an issue across platforms, the widening participation from those directly concerned to

the general public, and the increase in emotional intensity combined with a turn to attributional language can all be regarded as indicators of the progress of generalisation. To catch these signals is to achieve a technical prerequisite for advancing the assessment beyond the point of generalisation.

3. The Evolutionary Mechanism of Case Generalization in Shaanxi

3.1 The Generative Chain in Outline

This paper presents the mechanism of case generalisation as a generative chain consisting of four steps: triggering, symbolisation, consensus formation and crystallisation and migration, and these four steps occur in sequence and support each other. The Chain is not necessarily linear. The frame produced by crystallization lowers the threshold for triggering the following cases, and thus generalisation takes on the form of a self-reinforcing cycle and cumulative amplification.

3.2 Triggering

The start of the chain is called the trigger. Generalisation starts when a specific educational event or the implementation of a policy encounters a latent structural anxiety. What is likely to cause this is not the size of the incident, but whether it touches upon a sensitive area of people's existing anxieties; a relatively minor incident may provoke an exaggerated reaction if it happens to be in line with a broad sense of unease. Triggers fall into three general categories. The first is the problem of resource allocation, and distribution cannot be carried out effectively. The second is procedural; it refers to the fairness and transparency of the rules for enrollment, etc. The third is symbolic, referring to behaviour that is considered an insult to the dignity of teaching or education. Education in a risk society [3] is expected to reduce uncertainty, and any occurrence that is perceived to violate fairness or increase uncertainty can serve as a trigger. Moral shock acts as the trigger here [10], and the stronger the moral indignation that an event arouses, the more readily strangers across interpersonal networks are mobilized.

Triggers in the Shaanxi area are concentrated in the areas of educational resources and enrollment regulations. The continuous lack of high-quality school places in the provincial capital means that any information about the supply of places, changes in catchment areas, or

modifications to enrollment policies will be considered a trigger; the resource gap between urban and rural areas and among regions also gives events affecting county and rural schools a similar potential to be triggers; and given that it is a major examination province, any change in the admission process will touch many places. Public anxiety about educational equity in Shaanxi remains relatively high, and thus the energy needed to spark it is lower.

3.3 Symbolization

Symbolisation follows. The triggered case immediately undergoes compression and an abstraction of meaning, and is then distilled into a portable symbol or label. The pictures in our heads of which Lippmann wrote come into play here [1], and what the public has is not the whole truth of an event but its simplified emblem. The psychology of rumour transmission provides a finer explanation for the account of how information changes during transmission [17]. The three processes of information are reduction, enhancement and integration; through these, unnecessary details are eliminated, relevant components in line with people's expectations are emphasized, and the entire event is incorporated into their previous cognitive framework; thus, only a concise, emotionally impactful tag is left at the end. Leveling and sharpening a concrete event can be reduced to a simple symbol of educational equity or class circumstance, and this highly condensed symbol is precisely what holds the strongest mobilizing power [10]. In Shaanxi, the labels that are repeatedly condensed tend to be related to competition for resources and fairness of rules, such as a shortage of school places being perceived as a contest for housing and household registration; adjustments in enrollment rules being viewed as arbitrary and shifting policies; differences in regional investment as favoritism; and thus, a concrete event is reduced to a simple symbol of educational equity. A label is sticky once it has been created; it removes the obstacles to transmission across contexts, allows a case to be cited repeatedly after leaving its original setting, and makes any subsequent clarification of the facts unable to catch up with the symbol that has already spread.

3.4 Consensus Formation

Consensus formation is to spread the idea. Through a resonance of emotion and values, the

symbolised case is lifted from the experience of a few to the shared concern of many. Emotional contagion spreads anxiety and indignation through the network [11], and the transmission advantage of high-arousal emotions accelerates this spread [15]. Empirical studies have shown that moral-emotional language significantly expands the spread of content on social networks [18], and the newness of information and the emotional responses it triggers are considered important reasons for this rapid dissemination; fear, surprise, and anger are especially likely to drive transmission [19]. Recent syntheses of research on social media and morality have confirmed that morally and emotionally moving content attracts more attention and engagement on current platforms, thus providing an explanation for why a case gains traction after being presented in the language of fairness and injustice [20]. Onlookers project their own circumstances onto the symbolic case, invest their worry about their own future in another's present plight, and thus confirm and amplify anxiety in the projection; so that an affective public takes shape [12]. The spiral of silence drives dissent into silence [14], and the apparent consensus of an emotional judgment is further reinforced; thus, the consensus appears more solid than it is. In the Shaanxi area, the large and continuously growing number of parents and prospective parents in the provincial capital, along with the educational expectations carried by migration from the south and north of the province to the capital, have formed a demographic foundation for rapid consensus; thus, a local case quickly gathers cross-group emotional resonance and, in combination with nationwide anxiety about education, spreads beyond the region.

3.5 Crystallisation and Migration

Crystallisation and migration are at the far end of the chain. The problem has gradually lost its connection to the original incident, fallen into a reactive cognitive system, and spread to other times and places and related issues. Collective memory serves as a repository for such instances of problems [13]; when a new case occurs, it is recalled from this collective memory and generalised over time, and each restart further hardens the existing frame. Salience in the sense of agenda setting [7] has been achieved, and thus the issue will remain in the public's attention for a long time. Platform Mechanisms Enhance

Crystallisation. The filter bubble created by algorithmic personalisation [21] and the echo chamber formed through self-selection [22] both cause individuals with similar views to receive only like-minded information; thus, group cognition tends to polarise and is difficult to alter. Recent systematic reviews have indicated that the strength of such enclosure differs based on the platform, measurement, and country, and is not generally high; however, in places where it occurs, a broad framework has been formed and its dissolution is slow. In the platform society [24], the distribution of visibility itself is an amplifying factor, and a problem repeatedly promoted by the algorithm will continue to gain attention, thus securing more visibility. The problem-attention cycle shows that public attention rises and falls in a pattern [25]; however, due to persistent structural tensions, the ebb of attention in the field of education is often only temporary dormancy, and a periodic, predictable problem restarts at certain times. Migration is shown as the spread of a general frame from one locality to a wider area, and as the spilling of one type of problem into adjacent fields such as teacher behaviour, campus security, and policy execution, with different problems confirming and triggering each other. In Shaanxi, for example, the problems of school place supply and enrollment display a distinct seasonality, restarting at specific points in the admission calendar and settling into a stable cognitive frame; at the same time, the general frame spreads from the provincial capital to other prefectures, igniting adjacent issues, and thus public opinion in education takes on the form of an endless succession of waves.

3.6 How the Stages Map onto the Dimensions

The four stages and the five dimensions listed above are not independent of each other. Triggering is equivalent to the first rotation of the attributional dimension, and an event has been structurally interpreted. Symbolisation is used to abstract the problem dimension, and a specific case is reduced to a general argument. Consensus formation extends both the actor and the space to create a public sphere for spectators where a local issue gains a translocal significance. Crystallisation and migration lock in the temporal dimension, and this problem has the attribute of periodicity. The chain of mechanisms provides for the longitudinal progression of generalisation, and the map of

dimensions shows its lateral unfolding; only by combining the two can the whole of case generalisation be understood.

Each round of generalisation also results in a loss of trust. The public opinion has not been properly addressed, and thus, institutional suspicion has grown; consequently, the energy needed for the next trigger has been reduced. When trust is damaged, the public will view the following events more negatively and the threshold for generalisation will be lower. Case generalization is thus not a series of isolated events but an accumulated process in which each case informs the next, and every cycle of generalisation prepares the foundation for the subsequent cycle.

3.7 A Spectrum of Typical Issues and Their Pathways of Generalisation in Shaanxi

Applying the mechanism to the actual problems in Shaanxi Province, one can find several recurring types of issues and their respective paths for generalisation. They have the same generation mechanism but follow different paths based on the triggering character and the direction of symbolisation.

Enrollment and the availability of school places are the most frequent types of education-related public opinion in Shaanxi. Turning on the tightness of the supply of places, the drawing of catchment boundaries, and the adjustment of the rules governing public and private enrollment, such issues are largely procedural and resource-related in their triggering, and are readily read as unfair rules or uneven distribution. They then quickly generalize under the symbol of admission fairness, and from a problem of particular rules, they have become a broad inquiry into the entire system of selection and distribution. As educational resources are closely linked to the housing market, such problems are often associated with anxiety about property, and the chain of generalisation extends from enrollment to classroom and opportunity anxieties; thus, their scope is further expanded. Problems with the allocation of resources for urban and rural areas, and between different regions, are also clear cases of generalisation. Given that high-quality resources are concentrated in the provincial capital and county- and rural schools remain relatively weak, events involving regional investment, the migration of teaching staff, and school conditions are typical resource-related triggers

that can be readily generalised into a wholesale criticism of regional imbalance and urban-rural educational disparity. The problem of school admission for the children of migrant workers is directly related to the distribution of social status and opportunities; therefore, it can be easily viewed as discrimination against a particular group and thus falls under the broad category of unfairness in access to education.

Problems of teacher conduct and campus safety are symbolic in their triggers, strong in moral colouring, and high in emotional arousal; they are also cases that can be easily generalised from an individual act to a question of the entire standing of the profession and school management [10]. Problems of governance over private tutoring and the reduction of academic pressure fall into the category of tension between burden and fairness; different groups have different demands according to their own circumstances, and a case can easily be turned into a polarizing narrative and generalised as an ongoing dispute over educational burden and educational equity.

Although the paths of generalisation for different types of problems vary, they all use the same mechanism: triggering - symbolisation and consensus building - crystallization and dissemination. Identify the triggering characters of all types of problems and the general direction of their symbolization in Shaanxi Province as the foundation for anticipatory assessment and specific guidance for different kinds of problems.

3.8 Structural Amplifiers in the Shaanxi Context

The structure of the Shaanxi-area amplifiers will also be presented. The occurrence and the speed of case generalisation are subject to conditions in the province. These conditions do not create public opinion themselves, but they determine whether a case will be more easily triggered, how quickly it will be spread through resonance, and how slowly it will fade.

First, high-quality basic education resources are heavily concentrated in the central city and unevenly distributed across it, and the substance of the competition for admission is often a contest for a small number of high-quality spots. There is a structural tension between supply and demand; therefore, any occurrence that affects the allocation of resources will concern the public's broad interests and emotions and

provide continuous fuel for public opinion.

Second, under a provincial-capital-centered development pattern, the population continues to concentrate in the central city, some prefectures lose population, and gaps between regions and between urban and rural areas exist at the same time and reinforce each other. Fairness is thus also relatively sensitive at different levels and includes both competition for resources within the city and disparities in development among regions and between towns and rural areas, with grievances at different levels resonating with each other.

Third, education is tightly coupled with housing, and access to educational resources is bound up with the choice of where to live, so that a single educational event readily spills over into an issue of property and class. Anxiety about education and anxiety over property feed one another; the chain of generalisation is thus longer and its scope broader, and a single matter of admission can quickly turn into a discussion of class and opportunity.

Fourth, policies in the area of enrollment are adjusted relatively frequently, and the complexity and changes in these policies continuously provide new triggers and new focal points for public opinion. The Policy will not be released at a fixed time, so the public cannot set fixed expectations; any change will likely be interpreted as favouritism towards some groups and thus cause new disputes.

Fifth, changes in the demographic structure have created local mismatches between supply and demand, and shortages of resources and idleness of resources have occurred in different areas and at different schools; this tension is easily expressed through polarizing narratives and reduced to a zero-sum game of winners and losers.

The above factors are not independent; rather, they work together to enhance each other. Uneven distribution of resources provides the foundation for anxiety; regional and urban-rural disparities expand the scope of this anxiety; the linkage between education and housing extends the chain of generalisation; frequent changes in policy continuously provide triggers; and the mismatch between supply and demand furnishes material for polarisation. Together, the above conditions result in case generalization in Shaanxi having a lower threshold for triggering, a stronger intensity of resonance, and a longer period of crystallization, and together they form

the structural soil where generalization is likely to occur.

4. Guidance Mechanisms for Arresting Over-Generalisation

At the heart of guidance is to interrupt the chain at which a case becomes a problem, and rather than passively responding after generalisation occurs, various interventions can be made at different times. As generalisation is a chain that advances step by step, the guidance should change from aiming for the result to focusing on the process, and early interventions at weak links in the chain can prevent a large-scale error at a low cost.

4.1 Anchoring Facts before Symbolization

The first is to ground the facts before symbolisation. Because a symbol is sticky once formed, and after-the-fact clarification cannot catch up with a label already in circulation, a mechanism for the rapid supply of authoritative information should be established for frequently triggered issue areas to provide clear and complete facts before a case is labelled and compress the window for symbolisation. Domains in Shaanxi that are frequently triggered and foreseeable, such as enrollment and the supply of school places, especially require a standing mechanism for rapid response that proactively releases information well in advance of sensitive periods in the admission calendar at the authorities' own initiative. Timely and accurately provide factual references to be effective; otherwise, a delayed or vague reply will fail to prevent symbolisation and may be regarded as conjecture, thus promoting the spread of labels.

4.2 Differentiating the Incident from the Structural Problem

Secondly, it should be known whether a problem can be solved in the current context; otherwise, it is regarded as a structural problem. A case should be handled as a case and policy as policy. The response to a specific incident should not be generalised to defend the entire institution; otherwise, it will seem as if a minor local dispute has escalated into a systemic problem and thus be used by opponents as a weapon. At the same time, the real structural problems in the case should not be avoided or hidden but addressed head-on at the policy level. The two are not the same; one is used to address false accusations,

and the other is for genuine complaints, and they should not be treated as adversaries.

4.3 Reducing Uncertainty through Policy Transparency

The third is to reduce the fuel of uncertainty by making the policy more transparent and predictable. Policies in sensitive areas such as enrollment should be stable for as long as possible, announced in advance, and fully explained in terms of their purpose, so that guidance on periodic and foreseeable problems is provided before public opinion develops. Policy uncertainty is to be expectedly varied; thus, a smaller range of the original trigger will be established, stable expectations will be created for the public, and repeated anxiety after modifications will be avoided. Policies on enrollment in Shaanxi are changed relatively frequently; therefore, stability and predictability are required, and clear, stable and foreseeable arrangements for catchment areas, enrollment rules and supply of places should be provided; gradually reducing the rigid connection between education and housing will further break the chain through which a case generalizes from enrollment to property and class.

4.4 Clarification and Addressing the Underlying Anxiety

Fourth, we will move from presenting the facts to addressing the underlying anxiety. The deep engine of case generalisation is structural anxiety; it cannot be solved by presenting facts and may be worsened by giving the impression of avoiding responsibility. Guidance needs to restore people's sense of fairness and trust in institutions at the level of narrative, offering an institutional response to the concern about educational inequality rather than just correcting specific facts. The root cause of anxiety among the public in Shaanxi over education is a lack of high-quality resources and their uneven distribution; thus, to alleviate this anxiety, specific measures are needed to increase the supply of high-quality resources and promote high-quality balancing. Since an affective public is connected by emotion [12], its guidance should also consider the reception and response to emotions; otherwise, the supply of information without a response to feeling will fail to move public opinion.

4.5 Multi-actor Coordination and the

Monitoring and Response Loop

The fifth is to establish a closed-loop system of monitoring, early warning and response through multi-party cooperation. Generalisation of cases is a cross-platform and cross-actor process that no single actor can handle alone. In terms of research on cooperative governance, effective cooperation needs to have face-to-face communication, build trust gradually, and jointly design the process; otherwise, simply connecting departments will not be effective [26]. Recent research on the governance of online public opinion has also shown that official media, netizens and the government work together to direct the development of issues [27]. The capacity of the province in Shaanxi for monitoring and evaluating online public opinion can be used to coordinate the actors involved and establish a province-wide loop of monitoring, early warning and response to prevent new triggers from arising due to inconsistent statements between the capital and the prefectures or among departments. Education authorities, local governments, schools, the media, and platforms should all take responsibility; by utilizing the analysis capabilities of big data [6], real-time monitoring and early warning of the signals of generalisation can be achieved, and a consistent pace of response should be maintained so that mutually contradictory statements do not become new triggers themselves. The platforms play a role in distributing the visibility of [24] and are thus essential parties to coordination; at the same time, the polarisation caused by filter bubbles [21] and echo chambers [22] must also be alleviated through moderate adjustments to platform mechanisms.

4.6 Graded and Time-sensitive Response, and Operational Indicators

The sixth is to respond promptly and according to the schedule. The various stages of generalisation have different degrees of feasibility and thus require different amounts of guidance resources. For regular and foreseeable high-frequency problems, advance guidance should be given to release information before the critical time. Rapidly anchor to facts in urgent cases and avoid symbolization. Set up the cognitive framework, and then carry out an extended, continuous narrative repair for the call to looseness; otherwise, haste will be counterproductive.

Realisation of advance guidance depends on an operational assessment of the signals for generalisation. Under the conditions of big data [6], the symptoms of symbolisation, consensus formation and crystallisation can be transformed into concrete indicators, such as the speed at which keywords drift from specific referents to abstract issues, the proportion of emotional intensity and moralised discourse, the breadth of cross-platform spread, the rate of participation expansion, and the frequency with which similar historical issues are mentioned again. The purpose of the above indicators is not precise prediction, but rather the early detection of the critical point for generalisation, thus winning a window of time for stage-specific guidance. Assessment and guidance thus form a continuously adjusted loop, and the results of monitoring are used to adjust both the time and strength of guidance.

4.7 The Limits and Risks of Guidance

Direction also has limitations and is subject to risks. Guidance is not prohibition; therefore, excessive or poorly thought-out interference will be counterproductive. A delay in information release and contradictions among the statements are likely to undermine credibility, and the suppression of legitimate grievances may lead to secondary public opinion that dissatisfaction with an event has turned into dissatisfaction with how it has been handled. The scope of guidance should be to prevent overgeneralisation while protecting legitimate expression; at the same time, it needs to be both orderly and responsive to concerns, otherwise, guidance will itself become a subject for new generalisations.

5. Summary

Case generalisation is the most harmful stage in the development of public opinion on education. Through triggering, symbolisation, consensus formation, and crystallisation and migration, a specific event can be promoted to a broad question of educational equity and institutional trust in a short amount of time. However, it is also the most manageable stage, and every node in the chain is an opportunity for instruction. To find the critical point at which a case becomes a problem and to address it before the symbol is created and agreement is reached is to reach a genuine lever for influencing public opinion on education. The further down the chain, the more pronounced the crystallization and higher the

visibility; therefore, the cost of intervention is also higher, and thus the centre of gravity for guidance should be shifted forward.

Generalisation of cases in education-related public opinion in Shaanxi is rooted in structural problems, such as uneven distribution of high-quality resources, urban-rural and regional disparities, and the coupling of education with housing under a provincial-capital-centered model. Generally speaking, the leading ideas are no longer to handle cases individually; instead, the trend is to build regulatory systems based on events, to go from fact disclosure to anxiety reduction, and to change from a single-actor response to multi-actor cooperation. Only by addressing the public's deep concern for educational equity at the structural level and restraining the excessive expansion of a single case into a system-wide problem at the mechanism level can the governance of education-related public opinion shift from a reactive model to a proactive one and cease to be an emergency response. With an expanding supply of big data for assessment and guidance, we can now offer more timely, accurate and personalised guidance; however, before doing so widely, we need to know about its defects.

In short, the regulation of public opinion in education is also a type of regulation for promoting social equity. A case is a particular instance of the public's deep-seated concern about educational fairness, and public opinion repeats because structural problems have not been addressed. Guidance can limit the scope of the case, but it will not address the basic reasons for educational inequality. Only by expanding the supply of high-quality resources, narrowing the gaps between urban and rural areas and among regions, and enhancing the stability of policy, while at the same time advancing public opinion guidance that is precise and humane, can the two reinforce each other and the frequency and intensity of case generalization be reduced at the root.

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