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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Research on the Integration Path of Red Family Letters into the Cultivation of College Students' National Sentiment**

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**| ABSTRACT**

Red family letters represent a microcosmic history of the Chinese Communist Party and a vivid national history. Forged with the blood and deep affection of revolutionary forebears, they embody the ideals, convictions, family-state responsibility, and national integrity of Chinese Communists, and constitute a valuable educational resource for cultivating college students' national sentiment. As a core competency for college students, the cultivation of national sentiment requires the synergistic effort of emotion, cognition, and practice. From the perspective of the internal logic, red family letters can touch the heart through family narratives, evoke emotional resonance, reinforce rational identity with ideals and convictions, and stimulate action through role models, thereby achieving the unity of knowledge and action. In terms of the current reality of higher education, the integration of red family letters into college students' national sentiment cultivation faces four mismatches: emphasis on stock rather than incremental supply, emphasis on transmission rather than acquisition, emphasis on indoctrination rather than internalization, and emphasis on theory rather than practice. Accordingly, efforts should be made in five aspects – deepening cognition, enhancing capacity, innovating forms, enriching carriers, and optimizing mechanisms – to construct targeted practical pathways for integrating red family letters into the cultivation of college students' national sentiment, thereby providing theoretical references and practical guidance for colleges and universities during the 15th Five-Year Plan period in fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue and strengthening national sentiment education.

**| KEYWORDS**

Red family letters; college students; national sentiment; pathway research

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The 15th Five-Year Plan period marks the critical first five years of comprehensively building a modern socialist country and a crucial stage for laying a solid foundation for the basic realization of socialist modernization by 2035. The Proposal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, reviewed and adopted at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee, explicitly states the need to “strengthen and improve ideological and political work, promote campus culture, make good use of red resources, and strengthen ideal and conviction education among young people.” As an important component of red cultural resources, red family letters are a precious spiritual treasure of the Party and vivid teaching materials for fulfilling the era's task of fostering virtue. Against this backdrop, using red family letters to cultivate college students' national sentiment has profound theoretical value and practical significance.

#### *1. Theoretical Logic of Integrating Red Family Letters into the Cultivation of National Sentiment among College Students*

Drawing on Marxist theory as its fundamental guide and incorporating relevant principles from psychology and the theory of ideological and political education, the cultivation of national sentiment through red family letters follows a progressive logic of

“emotion → cognition → action → internalization,” which is consistent both with the laws of human cognitive development and the inherent requirements of cultivating national sentiment.

### 1.1 Emotion: Touching the Heart through Family Narratives and Evoking Emotional Resonance

Marx's discussion of emotion profoundly reveals the internal connection between emotion and cognitive activity. He pointed out: “Man's relation to the world – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, thought, intuition, emotion, desire, activity, love – in short, all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in form, are in their objective orientation, i.e., in their relation to the object, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of human reality.” This passage indicates that emotion is not an isolated subjective experience but is rooted in man's objective activity – it is an inner feeling generated in the process of knowing and transforming the world. In other words, emotion is based on cognition and in turn deepens cognition; the two penetrate and promote each other. This principle offers an important insight for cultivating national sentiment: the formation of national sentiment requires both rational cognition and emotional resonance, and the two are unified in educational practice, serving as a crucial foundation for cultivation.

The most prominent feature of red family letters is their genuinely emotional expression. Using family narratives as the main thread, they transform the rather rigid methods of traditional national sentiment education, influencing both through reason and emotion, thus achieving a deeper level of emotional resonance. Most red family letters are private letters written by revolutionary forebears to their parents, spouses, or children. Between the lines, they express concern for family and attachment to loved ones, as well as anxiety about the fate of the nation and persistence in national rejuvenation. Combining personal affection with the greater cause of the country, they present a large theme through small details, offering college students a unique entry point to approach and understand national sentiment on an emotional level. In the farewell letter written by General Zuo Quan to his wife before his death, he wrote: “Parting is easy but reunion is hard; we have been separated for twenty-one months. When will we meet again? I miss you, miss you, miss you, miss you!” The four characters for “miss” convey his profound attachment to the utmost. He pours out his longing for his wife and daughter while also expressing his unshakable conviction to “sacrifice everything for the cause of national liberation.” This authentic life writing enables college students to break away from abstract understandings of “national sentiment,” uses family bonds as a bridge to touch their hearts, and generates strong emotional resonance. Thus, love for relatives is elevated into love for the country and the nation, laying a solid emotional foundation for national sentiment. The realization of emotional resonance is precisely the educational practice of what Marx called “affirming oneself in the objective world through all one's senses” – in the “object relationship” with red family letters, students complete the emotional appropriation and meaning construction of national sentiment.

### 1.2 Cognition: Reinforcing Rational Identity with Ideals and Convictions

The dialectical unity of perceptual knowledge and rational knowledge is a fundamental principle of Marxist epistemology and an important theoretical guide for cultivating national sentiment. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx profoundly stated: “Man affirms himself in the objective world not only through thought but through all his senses,”<sup>[5]</sup> and emphasized that “sense in its practice directly becomes theoretician.” This reveals the basic law that perceptual knowledge is the starting point of cognition, rational knowledge is the deepening of cognition, and both are unified in practice. The cultivation of national sentiment cannot stop at emotional touch; it must also guide students to deeply understand the historical logic, value concepts, and spiritual core behind the letters, thereby achieving the rational leap from “being moved” to “identification.” “Entering the brain” refers to the process whereby national sentiment education rises to rational identification and conscious thinking, consistent with the progressive pattern of Kelman's three-stage theory of attitude change (compliance → identification → internalization), with the goal of moving from passive compliance to active internalization. Red family letters, with “family” as the base, “nation” as the core, “people” as the subject, and “the world” as one's responsibility, contain a unique concept of “family-state isomorphism” and serve as a lively vehicle for deepening rational cognition.<sup>[6]</sup> Red family letters record revolutionary forebears' unwavering belief in Marxism, persistent pursuit of national independence, and unremitting struggle for the people's happiness during the crucial periods of the Chinese revolution, construction, and reform. For example, Nie Zhijun wrote in his letter: “Especially now that the War of Resistance has reached this stage, the national crisis is as severe as it can be! Can young people still hesitate and seek ease? I think absolutely not... Chinese educated youth should not shirk their responsibility.” This exemplifies the spirit of “everyone is responsible for the rise or fall of the country.” Zuo Quan wrote: “As much as I love Taipei [his daughter], should the situation change, you may dispose of Taipei's matter as you see fit, without regard for me.” This demonstrates the spirit of “sacrificing one's own family for the greater good.” Xia Minghan wrote before his execution: “Beheading is nothing – as long as the creed is true. Kill one Xia Minghan, there will be later ones!” This interprets the revolutionary spirit of “fearing no sacrifice, fighting dauntlessly.” By reading red family letters, college students can directly perceive the arduous course of China's revolution, construction, and reform, deeply recognize how hard-won national independence, liberation, and people's happiness have been, understand the core connotation and contemporary value of national sentiment, and clarify the dialectical relationship between individual destiny and the destiny of the country and nation. Thus guided by ideals and convictions, the cultivation of national sentiment helps students transcend superficial understandings,

form a rational identity with the country and the nation, and establish correct views of the nation, the state, history, and culture, making national sentiment an internalized ideological consciousness.

### *1.3 Action: Inspiring Action through Role Models and Achieving Unity of Knowledge and Action*

Action is the ultimate embodiment of thought. Marx stated in the *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*: "Theory becomes a material force once it has seized the masses; theory is capable of seizing the masses once it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* once it becomes radical." National sentiment must be internalized in the mind and, even more, be manifested in concrete action. Red family letters possess the power of role models, transforming students' emotional resonance and rational identity into tangible actions, truly achieving the unity of knowledge and action. Behind red family letters lie the real-life experiences of countless revolutionary forebears who, with their lives, shouldered responsibility. They gave up personal comfort, abandoned a life of ease, actively devoted themselves to the revolutionary cause, and paid any price for national independence and liberation. Their own actions embodied the profound meaning of national sentiment. These spirits do not remain in history; they transcend time and remain ever fresh. Chen Hong, granddaughter of Zhao Yiman, after retiring, went everywhere speaking about her grandmother's story. At the 80th anniversary of the victory of the War of Resistance, she said with tears: "Grandma, I witness this glorious era for you." Two generations, one promise – this is the true continuation of national sentiment. These role models, vividly presented through red family letters, provide students with visible and learnable examples. From being moved to identification, from identification to action, national sentiment takes root in students' hearts. Students then integrate national sentiment into their daily study and life, actively take on social responsibility, hone their abilities through specialized learning, contribute their youthful energy in social practice, and embed their personal ideals in the great cause of national development and rejuvenation, thereby realizing true unity of knowledge and action in national sentiment.

### *1.4 Internalization: Forging Faith through Spiritual Inheritance and Achieving Value Internalization*

Marx's exposition in the *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* reveals the mechanism for transforming external theory into internal faith: only when theory truly "convinces" people and is accepted deeply from within can it become a force for transforming the world. Marx also emphasized: "It is not enough that thought should seek to become reality; reality must also seek to become thought." This means the ultimate goal of value education is not to make students aware of a certain idea but to make that idea an internal belief they consciously pursue. "Entering the heart" of national sentiment is precisely the process of elevating from external educational input to internal value faith. In Kelman's three-stage theory of attitude change, internalization is the highest stage – the individual integrates the new attitude with his or her existing beliefs, forming a stable value system that is highly autonomous and firm, unshaken by external pressure. The theory of ideological and political education acceptance similarly holds that the completion of internalization signifies the transformation of educational content from "external requirement" to "internal belief," becoming the fundamental criterion for individual action. On the eve of his execution, Xia Minghan wrote to his wife: "Persist in revolution and carry out my will; swear to pass the truth on to the world." His daughter Xia Yun lived her entire life in accordance with her father's will, passing on the red spirit. Two generations, one faith – these role models conveyed by red family letters are true portrayals of value internalization after national sentiment "enters the heart." With their authentic emotional narratives and lofty spiritual connotations, red family letters provide a high-quality vehicle for guiding college students from emotional resonance and rational identity to the establishment of faith. By reading and passing on red family letters, students can internalize national sentiment as a spiritual belief and a value coordinate, achieving the profound leap from "being moved" to "identification" and then to "faith," so that national sentiment truly "enters the heart" and becomes an enduring spiritual foundation.

## *2. Practical Challenges in Integrating Red Family Letters into the Cultivation of National Sentiment among College Students*

In recent years, the educational value of red family letters has become increasingly evident. Colleges and universities have actively explored the collection, organization, teaching application, and practical education of these letters and have achieved preliminary results. However, from an overall perspective, the educational value of red family letters has not been fully released, and their integration has fallen into four mismatches: resource supply vs. educational demand; content presentation vs. mode of acceptance; historical context vs. realistic cognition; and knowledge impartation vs. practical action.

### *2.1 Mismatch between Resource Supply and Educational Demand: Emphasis on Stock, Neglect of Increment*

Red family letters are abundant in quantity, covering different revolutionary periods and groups. They carry a rich historical memory and spiritual content. Their most valuable educational asset lies in the authenticity of their "private narratives" – they are not public political declarations but intimate words addressed to loved ones, revealing the revolutionaries' genuine emotional fluctuations and value choices, something other red resources cannot replace. Currently, there is a clear mismatch between resource supply and the actual needs of college students' cultivation: a large amount of "stock" material is difficult to transform into effective "increment." This is reflected in two main aspects.

On the one hand, the supply is homogenized, weakening the “private narrative” character of the letters. The red family letters currently used for cultivating college students are mostly excerpts from classic letters, often focusing on revolutionary sacrifice and grand narratives of family-state righteousness, lacking systematic exploration of letters from different groups and different contexts. Some selection methods only retain the “politically correct” passages, omitting trivial matters of daily life and personal relationships. Yet it is precisely these “trivial” matters that constitute the unique charm of red family letters – the revolutionary forebears were also ordinary people with concerns for their families and attachment to life. Stripping away this content reduces red family letters to ordinary revolutionary stories, greatly diminishing their power to move. Contemporary college students have diverse and individualized needs. They not only want to understand the grand revolutionary history but also hope to see the warm personal stories behind the letters, eager to find a connection between red spirit and their own growth. Some letters overly emphasize political propaganda and indoctrination, neglecting the synergy between family affections and national sentiment, thus failing to evoke emotional resonance. This results in a disconnection between supply and demand.

On the other hand, the supply structure is unbalanced, concealing the “historical detail” value of the letters. The supply of red family letters is mostly “passive push,” lacking precise research on students’ needs. The content and forms do not match students’ cognitive levels and acceptance habits – lower-grade students need letters that provide emotional enlightenment, while higher-grade students need letters that deepen the spirit and facilitate practical transformation, but current resources are poorly adapted. Moreover, the resources mostly remain at the “textual level” and are often “decontextualized” – only the text is given, without key details such as the historical background, the recipient’s information, or the subsequent fate of the writer and recipient. These “contexts” constitute the complete life course of the letter. Ignoring them turns the letter into an isolated, static text, losing its vividness as a “historical intermediary.” Consequently, students find it difficult to understand the letters’ contemporary value and cannot transform the resources into inner support for their own national sentiment. The abundant “stock” fails to produce educational “increment.”

### *2.2 Mismatch between Content Presentation and Mode of Acceptance: Emphasis on Transmission, Neglect of Acquisition*

At present, red family letters have gradually been integrated into college ideological and political classrooms and thematic educational activities, achieving “entering the classroom and teaching materials.” However, there are still obvious shortcomings in “entering the heart and the mind.” The core problem lies in the mismatch between how the content is presented and how students accept it, making it difficult to stimulate active participation and emotional identification. The unique advantage of red family letters lies in their “textual readability” and “imaginative participation.” Readers need to mobilize their imagination to reconstruct scenes and experience emotions – this “active construction” process itself constitutes deep learning. Yet in current educational practice, this advantage has not been realized; instead, it is undermined by rigid presentation.

First, the presentation methods are traditional and monotonous, destroying the sense of “being there.” Most colleges still rely on “text recitation, PPT explanation, and classroom lectures,” which are stiff and dull, ill-adapted to the acceptance habits of contemporary college students. The charm of red family letters lies in “reading the letter as if seeing the person” – the reader seems to travel through time and meet the writer face to face. This sense of “being there” is a unique experience distinguishing them from other historical documents. But traditional presentation reduces the letter to a “knowledge point”: the teacher explains sentence by sentence, and the student passively takes notes, completely dissolving the letter’s vividness as a “dialogic text.” Students of the internet generation are accustomed to fragmented, visual, and highly interactive ways of receiving information, while the traditional approach emphasizes the transmission of theory and lacks immersive, situated experience, turning red family letters into “dry texts,” failing to touch hearts, evoke resonance, or achieve the goal of “entering the heart.”

Second, the lack of interactivity blocks the “inter-generational dialogue” attribute of the letters. The cultivation of red family letters is mostly a one-way output, lacking design for students’ active participation and reflection. Red family letters are essentially “dialogue across time and space.” The writer pours out his or her heart to a future recipient, and contemporary college students, as “indirect recipients,” should participate in the role of “reply-writers.” However, in current practice, students are positioned as “spectators,” only passively listening, unable to express their feelings or respond. In most educational activities, students find it difficult to engage in interpreting, sharing, or performing the letters, cannot relate the content to their own experiences, and the presentation often remains disconnected from students’ real life, failing to link the spirit of the letters with their own study and growth. As a result, students hardly perceive the letters’ contemporary significance, cannot internalize national sentiment as a value pursuit, and “entering the classroom” remains a formal coverage without achieving the goal of “entering the heart.”

### *2.3 Mismatch between Historical Context and Realistic Cognition: Emphasis on Indoctrination, Neglect of Internalization*

Red family letters were born in a special revolutionary historical context. They carry the national sentiment, ideals, convictions, and sense of responsibility of revolutionary forebears during the war-torn years. Their spiritual core has eternal value. However, contemporary college students grow up in a time of peace and lack direct experience and deep understanding of revolutionary history. As a result, there is a disjunction between the historical context of the letters and students’ realistic cognition. Their

"admiration" for the revolutionary forebears finds it difficult to translate into "internalization" of national sentiment, and the educational value fails to be realized. The deep root of this mismatch lies in the fact that the "authentic imperfection" of the letters has been filtered out, romanticized, or sanctified, making the revolutionaries seem unapproachable and widening the historical gap.

On the one hand, the gap in historical context leads to cognitive bias, and "excessive sanctification" exacerbates this gap. The historical scenes, social environment, and value concepts reflected in the letters differ greatly from the peaceful environment, living conditions, and value pursuits of contemporary college students. Some students find it difficult to understand why the revolutionaries made choices that upheld family-state righteousness and sacrificed personal interests under harsh conditions, and they even feel estranged from the spiritual connotations of the letters. More importantly, current educational practice often tends toward "excessive sanctification" – presenting only the "righteous and heroic" side of the revolutionaries while hiding their emotional struggles as ordinary human beings. In fact, the most touching aspect of red family letters is precisely their "contradictoriness": General Zuo Quan expresses both his determination to "sacrifice everything for national liberation" and his deep longing for his wife and daughter; Zhao Yiman, while firm in her belief to "sacrifice for national liberation," also harbors deep guilt and reluctance toward her young son. This tension between "ordinary person" and "hero" is the true moving quality of red family letters. Excessive sanctification makes students feel that the revolutionaries are unreal and distant, thus aggravating cognitive bias.

On the other hand, insufficient value articulation leads to difficulties in internalization, and the "priority of grand narrative" obscures individual care. In the current integration process, there is a lack of effective articulation between historical context and real life. The revolutionary spirit and national sentiment contained in the letters are not connected with the sense of mission and pursuit of growth of contemporary students, making it hard for them to find a connection between the red spirit and themselves. A key characteristic of red family letters is their "individual perspective" – they tell stories from the viewpoint of a concrete person. This should be a natural bridge connecting history and the present. However, in current educational practice, the "grand theme" is prioritized while the narrative value of the "individual story" is neglected, turning the letters into abstract "spiritual symbols." The cultivation process often emphasizes the sacrifice and devotion of the revolutionaries but does not guide students to think about "how can contemporary youth inherit the spirit of these letters?" As a result, students' admiration for the revolutionaries remains superficial and does not translate into self-driven action or value pursuit, making it difficult to internalize national sentiment and weakening the soul-nurturing value of the letters.

#### *2.4 Mismatch between Knowledge Impartation and Practical Action: Emphasis on Theory, Neglect of Practice*

The educational value of red family letters must ultimately be realized in students' practical action. However, in current higher education, there exists a widespread disconnection between knowledge impartation and practical action, showing a tendency to emphasize theoretical indoctrination while neglecting hands-on experience. National sentiment is not only emotional identification and rational cognition; it is also a competence that needs to be experienced in practice and cultivated through action. If education on red family letters stops at classroom instruction without a practical component, students will find it difficult to translate the spiritual power of the letters into concrete action, resulting in a rupture between "knowing" and "doing." The particularity of this challenge lies in the fact that the ultimate meaning of red family letters points to "response." The revolutionary forebears expressed their expectations of later generations in these letters. The mission of contemporary college students is not to "memorize" the letters but to "respond" to that expectation with action. Yet the most characteristic practical activity for these letters – writing a reply – is almost completely absent.

On the one hand, the single teaching method leads to a lack of practical components, especially the gap of "reply-based practice." Current education on red family letters mostly remains in traditional forms such as classroom lectures, thematic class meetings, and essay contests. Teachers focus on letting students "know" what the letters say and what spirit they express, but neglect to design practical activities such as volunteer service or red-themed field studies. More distinctive activities such as "writing a reply to the martyrs" or "continuing the letter" are nearly non-existent. Such "reply-based practice" constitutes both cognitive deepening and emotional expression, as well as a commitment to action, yet it has been seriously overlooked. For example, students may be deeply moved when they listen to Zuo Quan's letter in class, but after class they lack a concrete pathway to translate that emotion into caring for society or serving others. The emotional touch fails to become a lasting habit, and education falls into the trap of "moved when listening, excited when thinking, but inactive when returning."

On the other hand, biased evaluation mechanisms lead to a disconnection between knowledge and action. Current assessment systems mostly rely on cognitive indicators such as essays, exams, and reflective papers to measure learning outcomes, failing to effectively evaluate whether students practice national sentiment in daily life or engage in social service. For example, a student may recite Xia Minghan's poem fluently but lack a sense of responsibility in real life. This "inconsistency between knowledge and action" is a concentrated manifestation of the bias in evaluation orientation. If "writing a reply to the martyrs" were incorporated into the assessment, it could both evaluate students' depth of understanding and emotional input and guide them to internalize

“response” as self-driven action. But the current assessment system has almost no such “reply-based evaluation” design. Moreover, some educational activities overemphasize “result demonstrations” such as knowledge contests or essay competitions, ignoring students’ authentic experiences and behavioral development in practice, thus failing to motivate students to internalize national sentiment as daily motivation. This violates the fundamental principle of Marxist epistemology that “practice is the purpose and test of cognition,” making it difficult to achieve the leap from “entering the ears and brain” to “entering the heart and action.”

### *3. Practical Pathways for Integrating Red Family Letters into National Sentiment Education among College Students*

#### *3.1 Optimizing Resource Supply: From “Stock Accumulation” to “Precise Adaptation”*

The mismatch between resource supply and educational demand stems from the supply side’s lack of precise understanding of students’ needs. To address this, we should follow the principle of “demand orientation” and establish a resource supply system that is hierarchical, dynamic, and deeply developed.

First, establish a stratified and categorized resource library of family letters to respond to the differentiated needs of students at different academic stages. Educational psychology shows that significant differences exist in cognitive development levels and value concerns among college students of different grades. Lower-grade students are at the initial stage of value formation and are more sensitive to emotional experiences; therefore, selections should focus on letters that convey family warmth and initial patriotic sentiments. Higher-grade students are at a critical stage of life choices and have deeper reflections on ideals, convictions, and responsibility; selections should focus on letters that demonstrate value choices and the spirit of sacrifice, guiding them to think about “why they study and why they live.” Moreover, the time span and group coverage of the resource library should be expanded, systematically organizing letters from different revolutionary periods and taking into account the writing perspectives of different groups – intellectuals, workers and peasants, and revolutionary cadres – thus forming a “full time-space coverage, multi-group layered” resource matrix to avoid cognitive bias caused by a single type of material.

Second, deepen the secondary development and in-depth interpretation of letter resources to enhance their acceptability. Providing only raw texts is a “semi-finished” supply. Limited by their historical knowledge and reading ability, students find it difficult to accomplish the transformation from words to spirit on their own. We should organize a joint editing team consisting of Party history experts, ideological and political scholars, and frontline teachers to carry out “four-dimensional interpretation” of each letter: the historical dimension restores the background and the author’s situation; the emotional dimension analyzes the interplay between family affection and the greater cause of the nation; the spiritual dimension extracts the ideals, convictions, and personal strength; and the contemporary dimension explains the implications for today’s college students. Based on this, a pedagogical resource package containing “original letter + reading guide notes + contextual questions + extended reading” can be created, lowering the threshold for understanding and guiding students from “reading words” to “reading hearts.” At the same time, digital resources such as audio renditions, short videos, and VR scene reconstructions should be developed to meet the needs of different learning scenarios and acceptance habits.

Third, establish a demand-feedback and dynamic adjustment mechanism to shift from “passive push” to “demand-driven.” The current mismatch in resource supply often results from educators’ “wishful thinking” about students’ needs. A regular demand survey mechanism should be established, using questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews to collect information on students’ acceptance, preferences, and suggestions for improvement. Based on survey data, the structure and presentation of the resource library should be dynamically adjusted. At the same time, a “user evaluation” mechanism should be introduced, allowing students to rate and comment on the resources. These feedbacks serve as important bases for optimization. Through the closed loop of “supply → feedback → adjustment,” the letter resources can genuinely correspond to students’ cognitive levels and psychological acceptance, turning the “stock” into effective “increment.”

#### *3.2 Innovating Presentation Methods: From “One-way Transmission” to “Multi-dimensional Acquisition”*

The mismatch between content presentation and acceptance methods is essentially the result of educators clinging to a “teaching-centered” mindset while neglecting learners’ psychology of acceptance. To overcome this problem, we should follow “cognitive load theory” and “multimodal learning theory” to transform red family letters from “readable” to “visible, audible, tangible, and participatable.”

First, enrich presentation media to achieve a shift from “single modality” to “multimodal integration.” Cognitive load theory indicates that presenting information in a single text modality easily causes learner fatigue, while multimodal presentation can distribute cognitive load and improve learning outcomes. We should break away from the traditional framework of “text reading + PPT explanation” and build an immersive presentation system combining sight, hearing, and touch. Specifically: develop audio-enhanced recitation products for the letters and broadcast them regularly on campus radio and online platforms; produce 3-5 minute short videos on the theme of the letters, using animation and scene reconstruction to condense the story and spiritual core; introduce VR technology to reconstruct the historical settings in which the letters were written, allowing students

to “enter” the historical scene and experience an immersive emotional impact. Multimodal presentation is not a mere stacking of technologies but a selection of media combinations appropriate to educational goals, upgrading the letter from “flat text” to “three-dimensional experience.”

Second, design participatory activities to move students from “passive listening” to “active performing.” Constructivist learning theory holds that true internalization of knowledge occurs in the process where learners actively participate and construct meaning. The current “one-way output” model keeps students in the position of “recipients” for too long, making it difficult for them to develop deep emotional involvement. We should design participatory activities at various levels with low entry thresholds: letter-reading activities encourage individuals or groups to add music, props, etc., and experience the author's emotions through reading; letter-based situational dramas select excerpts with dramatic tension and allow students to write and perform, engaging in role-playing to understand the revolutionaries' inner journeys; “write a reply to the martyrs” activities guide students to express their feelings, reflections, and commitments as young people of today, achieving a “dialogic” spiritual inheritance; and thematic debate contests on topics such as “how to understand the spirit of sacrifice in peacetime” promote rational cognition through dialectical thinking. These activities transform students from “spectators” into “insiders,” achieving deep learning through “doing.”

Third, build online interactive communities to create a “online + offline” blended learning ecology. Contemporary college students' social and interactive lives heavily depend on digital platforms. We should actively occupy this space and extend red family letter education into students' daily digital life. Set up a “Family Letter Reading Together” column on campus networks, WeChat public accounts, and other platforms, including sections such as “Daily Reading” and “Voice-over,” encouraging students to share their thoughts and upload their recitations. Introduce “points + badges” incentive mechanisms to stimulate sustained participation. Regularly hold online live events, inviting Party history experts or descendants of the letter writers to tell stories and interact with students in real time. An online community breaks the constraints of time and space, extends letter learning from “classroom-bound” to “all-day companionship,” lowers the threshold for participation, and fosters a learning community. Through the integration of online and offline efforts, red family letters can truly “live” in students' daily study lives.

### *3.3 Strengthening Historical Articulation: From “External Indoctrination” to “Value Internalization”*

The mismatch between historical context and realistic cognition is essentially an “interpretive gap” between the past and the present. To resolve this mismatch, we should not simply erase the distance but use effective teaching strategies to help students develop “historical empathy” and achieve the cognitive-emotional leap from “admiration” to “internalization.” This requires educators to have a “hermeneutic” awareness – respecting historical authenticity while building bridges to the present.

First, implement a “dialogue between past and present” teaching strategy to deepen understanding through comparison. Building historical empathy means guiding students, under the premise of understanding historical conditions, to consider “what would I have chosen if I were there?” In teaching, a “three-step progression” can be used: Step 1, “restore the history” – explain in detail the historical background, social environment, and personal situation in which the letter was written, helping students develop a complete understanding of the historical context. For example, when explaining Zuo Quan's letter, one must restore the harsh conditions of the stalemate phase of the War of Resistance, the life-and-death situation of frontline commanders of the Eighth Route Army, and Zuo Quan's emotional suffering from prolonged separation from his wife and daughter. Step 2, “put yourself in their shoes” – pose guiding questions such as “If you had been Zuo Quan at that time, facing the conflict between family and country, what would you have chosen and why?” encourage students to make their own judgments based on historical logic rather than simply accepting a standard answer. Step 3, “look back at the present” – ask follow-up questions: “Have you ever encountered a similar conflict between ‘small family’ and ‘larger family’ in your own life? How did you handle it? What inspiration does Zuo Quan's choice offer you?” Through this “history → hypothesis → present” chain of progression, students, while respecting the specificity of history, can discover common spiritual ground, turning admiration into reflection on and calibration of their own actions.

Second, design thematic seminars on “the contemporary transmission of the spirit of family letters” to achieve creative transformation of values. The key obstacle to value internalization is that students do not know “what does this spirit have to do with me?” Educators should actively build a “bridge of transformation,” turning the spiritual cores (such as responsibility, dedication, sacrifice, loyalty) in the letters into concrete behavioral guidelines in a contemporary context. Set up a series of seminar topics, such as: “General Zuo Quan sacrificed his family for the country – how can we today balance academic work and family, personal development and social responsibility?” “Xia Minghan's unwavering conviction – how can contemporary young people resist the erosion of utilitarianism and nihilism?” These topics do not seek standard answers but encourage students to discuss based on their own experiences and disciplinary backgrounds, with the teacher acting as a guide, providing thinking frameworks to help deepen their critical reflection and form their own value judgments through the collision of views.

Third, explore “red resources from one’s own surroundings” to realize a shift from “other-narrative” to “self-narrative.” Students’ sense of distance from the distant past can be alleviated by “drawing materials from close at hand.” Design a theme activity entitled “My Family-State Story,” guiding students to pay attention to red elements in their own families: Is there an elder who participated in the revolutionary war? Is there a yellowed family letter recording the family’s migration and struggle? Encourage students to interview family members, consult genealogies, and sort through old photographs to discover and write their own “family letter story.” This activity makes students realize that national sentiment is not an exhibit in a museum but a spiritual gene flowing in their family’s blood. When students shift from “listening to others’ stories” to “telling their own stories,” the internalization of national sentiment changes from “external indoctrination” to “self-construction.” On this basis, hold “Family-State Story Sharing” sessions, placing outstanding “nearby stories” alongside classic “red family letters” to create a resonance between history and the present, completing value identification through mutual resonance.

Fourth, enhance teachers’ mediating abilities to avoid “rote-teaching” indoctrination. The teacher is the key “mediator” connecting historical texts and students’ cognition. If teachers themselves lack deep understanding of and emotional identification with red family letters, their teaching will be no more than a dry transfer of knowledge. Strengthen the training of ideological and political teachers and counselors in the literacy of family letters, requiring teachers to achieve “three understandings”: understand the text of the letter, understand the author’s life journey and inner world, and understand the spiritual implications of the era. On this basis, teachers should acquire the ability of “transformation” – turning historical narratives into discussable questions, experiential situations, and actionable values. Abandon the “conclusion-first” indoctrination mode, adopt the “Socratic questioning” approach to guide students’ independent thinking, and engage with students on an equal footing, building the bridge between history and the present in the dynamic interaction between teacher and student.

### *3.4 Promoting the Transformation from Knowledge to Action: From “Theoretical Teaching” to “Practical Cultivation”*

The disconnection between knowledge impartation and practical action is the most prominent “last-mile” problem in current red family letter education. Its root lies in the systematic absence of a “practical link.” Marxist philosophy of practice holds that practice is the ultimate destination of cognition and its test. To address this, we need to build a practical educational system that integrates the whole chain of “cognition → emotion → will → behavior,” transforming national sentiment from “classroom knowledge” into “life habits.”

First, construct a “three-step ladder” system of practical tasks to achieve gradual development from “micro-action” to “deep participation.” Behavioral psychology shows that habit formation should follow the “small-step principle” to avoid giving up when the initial threshold is too high. Design three levels of practical tasks: “basic → advanced → extended.” Basic-level tasks are low-threshold and easy to complete, such as writing a reflection on a family letter or participating in a thematic sharing session, aiming to build “action awareness.” Advanced-level tasks require more time and effort, such as visiting a red site, interviewing a veteran or descendant, or making a short video on a family letter. Extended-level tasks target motivated students, emphasizing creativity and social impact, such as planning a campus exhibition on red family letters, leading a team to give voluntary lectures in primary or secondary schools, or developing cultural products inspired by the letters and selling them for charity. These three levels are a “growth guidance” path; students may choose their starting point according to their own circumstances, and teachers provide necessary training and resource support to help students progressively deepen their practical engagement.

Second, establish a “family letter +” integration mechanism to break the barriers between the “second classroom” and the “first classroom.” The weakness of the practical link is partly due to the fact that red family letter education has been narrowed down to a “task for ideological and political courses,” divorced from students’ specialized studies and extracurricular activities. Promote the “family letter +” integration model, connecting the spirit of the letters with various practical carriers: “family letter + volunteer service” – organize student volunteer teams to give “red family letter mini-lessons” in primary and secondary schools or read the letters to the elderly in communities; “family letter + social practice” – incorporate family letter research into winter and summer social practice projects, encouraging students to collect family letter stories in former revolutionary base areas and produce research reports; “family letter + innovation and entrepreneurship” – support students in developing cultural products, study tours, or digital applications based on the letters, achieving a win-win of spiritual transmission and innovative ability; “family letter + disciplinary integration” – guide students from different majors to interpret the letters from the perspective of their own discipline, e.g., Chinese literature majors analyzing the literary and rhetorical features, history majors investigating the historical value, and communication majors studying the mediation strategies. This transforms red family letter education from “a solo performance by the ideological and political course” into “a symphony of whole-person education.”

Third, reform the evaluation system to incorporate “behavioral performance” as a core indicator. Evaluation serves as a “baton” for educational behavior. The current orientation of “emphasizing cognition while downplaying behavior” is an important institutional cause of the knowledge-action disconnect. Establish a three-dimensional evaluation system of “cognition + emotion + behavior,” elevating practical behavior to a status as important as test scores. Specific measures include: set up “practice credits,” requiring each student to complete at least one practical task, accounting for 30-40% of the final grade; establish a

"National Sentiment Practice File," recording students' participation in relevant activities (e.g., volunteer hours, number of lectures, quality of practice reports, cultural works) as an important basis for comprehensive assessment and awards; introduce "process evaluation," focusing not only on the "output" (a report, a work) but also on students' engagement, depth of reflection, and growth during the practice – for example, require students to keep a practice journal and participate in sharing sessions; explore "performance-based evaluation" by setting up realistic or simulated scenarios and observing students' reactions to "family-country dilemmas" to assess the degree of internalization of national sentiment. The core of evaluation reform is to make students realize that national sentiment is not a score "memorized and then forgotten" but a competence "lived and accompanied for life."

Fourth, cultivate a campus culture of practice so that national sentiment becomes a "daily-without-noticing" behavioral habit. The formation of behavioral habits depends not only on institutionalized practical tasks but also on an immersive cultural atmosphere. Colleges and universities should use regular, ritualized, and life-embedded activities to integrate the practice of national sentiment into students' everyday campus life: seize important commemorative dates such as Qingming Festival, May 4th Youth Day, and National Day to organize "Family Letter Spirit Practice Month" series of activities, forming a rhythm of "each month has a theme, each week has an activity"; leverage student clubs and class organizations to encourage students to independently plan letter-themed reading sessions, drama festivals, and creative markets, shifting practice from "required by the school" to "initiated by students"; create "Family Letter Corners" in libraries, teaching buildings, and dormitory areas, regularly updating displays, playing audio, and placing reading materials, so that students encounter the letters incidentally and receive spiritual nourishment unintentionally; recognize "exemplars of national sentiment practice" on a regular basis, publicizing their stories through campus media to create a demonstration effect of "everyone can learn, everyone is willing to learn." Through systematic and sustained cultural construction, national sentiment moves from "abstract concept" to "concrete behavior," from "classroom requirement" to "life habit," ultimately achieving a fundamental shift from "separation of knowledge and action" to "unity of knowledge and action."

#### 4. Conclusion and Outlook

Red family letters are a precious resource carrying revolutionary spirit and national sentiment. They possess a clear internal logic for cultivating national sentiment among college students. On the new journey of striving to realize the blueprint of the 15th Five-Year Plan and comprehensively building a modern socialist country, we must protect and make good use of this precious resource, telling the stories of the Party, of the revolution, of the base areas, and of the heroes and martyrs with heart and soul. We must continuously strengthen the cultivation of national sentiment in college students, pass on the red gene, protect the red legacy, and ensure that the red gene is passed down from generation to generation and never fades.

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