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High Emotion, Low Practice: A Survey on the Red Culture Literacy of Secondary School Teachers in Shanxi Province

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Abstract: Red culture is an important component of the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and secondary school teachers are the key force in inheriting red culture. This study, based on a questionnaire survey of 3,557 secondary school teachers in Shanxi Province, systematically examines the current Red Culture literacy from four dimensions: cognitive knowledge of red culture theory, emotional value identification, transmission/inheritance awareness, and dissemination and innovation awareness. The study finds that secondary school teachers exhibit high emotional identification, value recognition and inheritance, and willingness to innovate regarding red culture; however, cognitive depth is insufficient, teaching practice lacks systematicity, and there is a widespread sense of capability anxiety. On this basis, the study analyzes the causes from individual, school, and social policy perspectives, and proposes targeted recommendations to promote the genuine integration of red culture education into the entire process of educating people.

Keywords: Red culture, secondary school teachers, Shanxi Province

1. Introduction

Red culture is the advanced culture formed under the leadership of the Communist Party of China by the Chinese people in the processes of revolution, construction, and reform, bearing a distinctly specific character and national features, carrying heavy historical memory, noble spiritual pursuit, and clear value guidance (Wu & Wang, 2026). In the context of the new era, the inheritance and development of red culture is not only an important way to enhance cultural confidence and fortify ideological defenses but also a key component of fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing individuals who bear the responsibility of national rejuvenation (Huang & Liu, 2026).

The secondary school stage is a critical period for forming students' worldviews, life views, and value systems. As mentors in adolescent growth, teachers' own red culture literacy directly impacts the effectiveness and depth of red culture education (Guo, 2026). Shanxi Province, as a revolutionary base area, hosted anti-Japanese base areas such as Jin-Cha-Ji and Jin-Sui, gave rise to the Taihang Spirit and the Lvliang Spirit; red resources are rich and hold a prominent historical position (Yue, 2024). However, whether these abundant red resources can truly translate into educational advantages largely depends on whether teachers possess the corresponding cognitive foundation, transmission awareness, and instructional transformation ability.

At present, research on red culture education has mainly focused on its significance, resource development, or teaching models, while empirical studies focusing on teachers, particularly secondary school teachers' red culture literacy remain insufficient (Liu, 2021). Against this backdrop, this study targets Shanxi Province's secondary school teachers and uses a questionnaire survey to systematically examine the following questions: (1) How well do secondary school teachers grasp theoretical knowledge of red culture? (2) To what extent do secondary school teachers exhibit emotional identification and value recognition of red culture? (3) What are teachers' awareness and behavior in inheriting red culture within teaching? (4) Do secondary school teachers possess the willingness

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and ability to disseminate and innovate red culture? Through empirical analysis of these questions, this study aims to provide empirical evidence and strategic references for constructing an effective system to enhance teachers' red literacy.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research design

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically examine the current state and structural characteristics of secondary school teachers' red culture literacy. A self-report questionnaire was used to collect data on teachers' theoretical knowledge, emotional identification, transmission awareness, and dissemination and innovation awareness regarding red culture. The design served both descriptive and inferential purposes, providing empirical evidence for subsequent policy recommendations.

2.2 Sample and data collection

The target population comprised all in-service secondary school teachers in Shanxi Province, China. A stratified random sampling strategy was adopted. First, the 11 prefecture-level cities in Shanxi (Taiyuan, Datong, Shuozhou, Xinzhou, Lüliang, Yangquan, Jinzhong, Linfen, Changzhi, Yuncheng, and Jincheng) served as stratification variables. Within each city, further proportional allocation was made based on school location (urban, county, township) and subject area. The sample size was estimated assuming a 95% confidence level and a 3% margin of error, with an additional 20% allowance for invalid responses, resulting in a planned distribution of 3,700 questionnaires.

Data collection took place from September to November 2025. Questionnaires were distributed through local education bureaus to schools in paper form. Teachers completed the questionnaires anonymously and returned them on site. A total of 3,632 questionnaires were collected. After excluding those with patterned responses, more than 10% missing data, or obvious random answering, 3,557 valid questionnaires remained, yielding an effective response rate of 96.1%. The sample size met the requirements for multivariate statistical analysis (Kline, 2015).

The specific composition of the sample is presented in Table 1 (not reproduced here for brevity). Among the respondents, 71.3% were female; 45.3% had 21 or more years of teaching experience; 84.1% held a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification; 45.8% held a first-level professional title; 59.7% taught in county-level schools; 42.2% taught science and mathematics subjects; and 30.7% served as homeroom teachers. The sample distribution was largely consistent with the overall demographic characteristics of secondary school teachers in Shanxi Province, indicating good representativeness.

Table 1 Basic Information of Survey Respondents

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	1,020	28.7
	Female	2,537	71.3
Years of service	<5 years	515	14.5
	6–10 years	271	7.6
	11–15 years	543	15.3
	16–20 years	618	17.4
	21 years and above	1,610	45.3
Education	Diploma or below	175	4.9
	Bachelor's	2,993	84.1
	Master's	389	10.9

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Professional title	Level 3	381	10.7
	Level 2	761	21.4
	Level 1	1,630	45.8
	Senior	784	22.1
Region of school	Taiyuan region	466	13.1
	Datong region	240	6.7
	Shuozhou region	254	7.1
	Xinzhou region	964	27.1
	Lvliang region	528	14.8
	Yangquan region	135	3.8
	Jinzhong region	249	7.0
	Linfen region	186	5.2
	Changzhi region	256	7.2
	Yuncheng region	159	4.5
	Jincheng region	120	3.4
School location type	Urban (prefecture-level city)	1,371	38.5
	County (or county-level city)	2,123	59.7
	Township or rural	63	1.8
Subject taught	Humanities (Chinese, History, Politics, Geography, etc.)	1,350	38.0
	Science/Engineering (Math, Physics, Chemistry, etc.)	1,504	42.2
	Arts and Physical Education	209	5.9
	Other	494	13.9
Homeroom teacher	Yes	1,093	30.7
	No	2,464	69.3

2.3 Measurement instrument

A self-developed questionnaire, the Secondary School Teachers' Red Culture Cognition and Transmission Awareness Questionnaire, was used. The instrument was developed following several steps. (1) Based on literature review (Liu, 2021; Guo, 2026) and semi-structured interviews with five experienced secondary school teachers and three experts in red culture research, an initial item pool of 65 items was generated across four dimensions. (2) Six experts in education and red culture studies conducted two rounds of content validity evaluation, deleting items with ambiguous wording or unclear dimensional attribution, leaving 49 items. (3) A pilot test was conducted in two secondary schools in Xinzhou, Shanxi (N = 120). Based on item analysis (critical ratio method, corrected item-total correlation) and exploratory factor analysis, further adjustments were made to produce the final questionnaire.

The formal questionnaire comprised four dimensions: (1) Theoretical knowledge of red culture (10 items), measuring teachers' understanding of historical facts, policies, and local resources related to red culture; (2) Emotional identification and value recognition of red culture (10 items), measuring teachers' emotional connection, pride, and perceived value of red culture; (3) Transmission awareness of red culture (10 items), measuring teachers' willingness, behavioral frequency, and reflective tendencies in integrating red culture into teaching; (4) Dissemination and innovation awareness of red culture (10 items), measuring teachers' attitudes toward using new media, developing school-based curricula, and innovating transmission formats. An additional 9 items collected demographic information and overall self-ratings. All scale items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree/very unfamiliar/never", 5 = "strongly agree/very familiar/always").

Reliability analysis showed that the Cronbach's α coefficient for the total scale was 0.94. The α coefficients for the subscales were: theoretical knowledge, 0.87; emotional identification and value recognition, 0.91; transmission awareness, 0.89; dissemination and innovation awareness, 0.86. All exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.80 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating good internal consistency reliability.

Validity evidence was as follows. (1) Content validity: The average scale-level content validity index (S-CVI) rated by experts was 0.92. (2) Construct validity: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the four-factor model. The results showed acceptable model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.93$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05. Factor loadings for all items ranged from 0.52 to 0.81 ($p < 0.001$), supporting the four-factor structure. (3) Discriminant validity: The correlations among the four dimensions ranged from 0.42 to 0.65, all below 0.70, and the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each dimension were greater than the correlations between that dimension and any other, indicating good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

2.4 Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0. The analytical strategy involved: (1) Descriptive statistical analysis, calculating means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages for each item and dimension to present the overall distribution of teachers' red culture literacy. (2) Independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine differences across demographic variables (gender, years of experience, education, professional title, region, subject area, homeroom teacher status) on the four dimensions. Due to space limitations, the detailed results of these difference analyses are reported elsewhere. (3) Effect sizes (Cohen's d or η^2) were reported to assess the practical significance of any differences. All statistical tests were two-tailed, with the significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

2.5 Common method bias control

Because all data were collected from the same respondents via self-report, common method bias could be a concern. Procedural remedies included: (1) anonymous questionnaire administration; (2) use of reverse-coded items; (3) random ordering of scale items across different versions of the questionnaire. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was performed. An unrotated exploratory factor analysis showed that the first factor accounted for 28.6% of the total variance, below the 40% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003), suggesting that common method bias was not severe.

3. Research Results

3.1 Insufficient depth of cognitive knowledge of red culture theory

The survey shows that secondary school teachers generally have a basic understanding of red culture, but the depth of cognition needs strengthening.

Specific knowledge: only 9.3% of teachers can

clearly articulate the historical context of Shanxi's anti-Japanese base areas; 9.8% can clearly explain the core meaning of the Taihang Spirit and Lvliang Spirit; 12.5% can detail the life stories of Shanxi red figures. Most teachers are at an intermediate level of "general understanding" or "somewhat understanding," lacking deep, systematic grasp.

Regarding familiarity with local red resources and experiential engagement: only 8.3% have visited and can describe major provincial red sites in detail; 43.2% have only heard of the names. The localizing educational advantages of red resources have not been fully utilized.

In terms of policy understanding and value recognition, 10.2% of teachers are "very knowledgeable" about incorporating red culture into curriculum reform; 25.0% "very understand" the relationship between red culture and the sense of community of the Chinese nation, as well as patriotic education; 22.4% "very understand" the value of red culture in the new era. This indicates that teachers' macro-value recognition of red culture is higher than their grasp of specific policies and historical facts.

Overall, self-rated levels of "very knowledgeable" are 14.5% and "somewhat knowledgeable" 32.9%, totaling less than 50%. Therefore, the cognitive depth of middle school teachers' understanding of red culture needs improvement.

Table 2 Overall understanding level of secondary school teachers regarding red culture

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Overall, how would you rate your understanding of red culture?	Very unaware	61	1.7
	Not very aware	251	7.1
	Generally aware	1,559	43.8
	Quite aware	1,170	32.9
	Very aware	516	14.5

3.2 High emotional identification and value recognition of red culture

An overwhelming majority of teachers highly recognize the value and importance of red culture. 56.8% of teachers believe that learning Shanxi red culture is "extremely important" for strengthening ideals and beliefs; 65.0% believe that the spirit of hard work is "very valuable" in today's society; as many as 95.3% identify red culture as an important component of the treasured spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation; 96.2% believe that red culture education is an effective means to resist historical nihilism; 94.6% think that inheriting red culture is closely related to realizing the Chinese Dream.

Teachers hold deep pride and admiration for local red culture. As many as 92.9% say they feel "often" or "always" proud and admiring when mentioning Shanxi red culture and its heroes, while 96.2% are willing to engage in in-depth study of Shanxi red culture.

Overall, 95.4% of teachers rated their emotional identification with Shanxi red culture and value recognition as above average, with 65.7% at the level of "very high." This provides a solid emotional foundation and intrinsic motivation for carrying out red culture education.

Table 3 Emotional identification and value recognition for Shanxi's red culture

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Overall, what is your level of emotional identification and value recognition toward Shanxi red culture?	Very low	3	0.1
	Relatively low	44	1.2
	Moderate	116	3.3
	Relatively high	1,056	29.7
	Very high	2,338	65.7

3.3 Transmission willingness and teaching practice show divergence

Teachers' transmission awareness and teaching practice show strong willingness to inherit but insufficient practice. In classroom integration, 58.3% of teachers indicate they "often" or "always" consciously integrate red culture elements into lessons. In homeroom and similar settings, 64.7% "often" or "always" actively cite red stories to educate students. This indicates that red culture integration into daily teaching has achieved a certain level of ubiquity.

In thematic practice and resource utilization, depth and systematicity need improvement. 49.5% of teachers have designed and implemented red culture-themed teaching activities, but only 20.2% have implemented them systematically on multiple occasions. Regarding multimedia resources, 44.7% of teachers can "often" or "always" use multimedia carefully, but 46.2% still remain at the "sometimes" level. Practical teaching stages are weaker; only 19.2% of teachers have personally guided students to visit red sites multiple times.

In terms of instructional transformation and reflective ability, teachers generally show capability anxiety. Only 17.2% of teachers feel they "completely possess" the ability to transform red culture into teaching resources, while 44.8% feel they are "somewhat capable" or "average." In guiding students to understand the spiritual essence in teaching, 56.4% of teachers can do this "often" or "always." 62.2% would "often" or "always" reflect on how to better transmit red culture and pay attention to learning from others' experiences, demonstrating a positive willingness to learn and develop.

3.4 Dissemination and innovation awareness is relatively strong

Teachers are open to disseminating and innovating red culture, though most remain at the conceptual level.

Participation in learning: 77.3% of teachers are "very willing" or "quite willing" to participate in relevant trainings, showing a strong intention to improve.

In terms of format innovation and new media usage: 81.5% believe innovating methods of transmission to suit student characteristics is "very necessary" or "quite necessary." 88.5% agree on using new media to disseminate red culture, indicating a keen sensitivity to changes in the times.

In terms of school-based development and campus atmosphere, support and willingness to participate are high. 89.9% support developing local feature red school-based courses, with nearly half indicating willingness to participate in development. 84.7% are willing to contribute suggestions or efforts to improve the campus red education atmosphere.

In terms of role identity and social responsibility, there is a high level of consensus. 86.5% fully or relatively agree that teachers should be practitioners and exemplars of red spirit. 90.3% believe that the inheritance of red culture is everyone's responsibility. When facing historical distortions, 90.8% are willing to step up to clarify and defend.

Regarding future willingness, 79.6% of teachers have a "quite strong" or "very strong" willingness to actively inherit and innovate red culture in their future work. This strong future-oriented willingness is a valuable psychological resource for promoting the ongoing deepening of red culture education.

4. Discussion

This study reveals the structural characteristics of red culture literacy among secondary school teachers in Shanxi Province, manifested as a high degree of consistency in emotional identification, value recognition, and willingness to pass on the tradition, alongside significant gaps in cognitive depth, teaching practice, and professional competence. This paradoxical situation of "high emotion – low practice" actually reflects the various dilemmas encountered in the process of transforming red culture education within teacher literacy. The following sections will analyze the causal logic behind this paradox from three distinct dimensions.

4.1 The "suspended" tendency in teachers' cognition of red culture

Secondary school teachers' cognition of red culture exhibits a "suspended" characteristic, marked by being "strong at the macro level but weak at the micro level, with deeper understanding but insufficient grasp of specific historical facts." The reasons for this lie in the lagging pace of knowledge updates and the "fragmented" and "de-contextualized" nature of knowledge construction.

Most teachers' knowledge of red culture is primarily acquired during their pre-service education, relying mainly on textbooks and promotional materials. There is a general lack of systematic integration of red culture history, local practices, and theoretical evolution. Non-humanities and non-social studies teachers often accumulate this knowledge in a "point-based" manner, making it difficult to achieve a thorough understanding of its spiritual essence.

Teachers' cognition of red culture lacks a "localized" orientation. Shanxi possesses abundant red resources, yet most teachers merely "know of" them without deeply integrating field experiences, making it difficult to transform red culture into "living knowledge" applicable to practice.

Teacher training systems inadequately guide cognitive deepening. They often focus on policy concepts and lack "reconstructive" intervention measures for red culture, failing to help teachers construct a framework connecting "historical facts – values – teaching."

4.2 The "transformational rupture" from emotional identification to teaching practice

Teachers' emotional identification with red culture has not effectively translated into systematic teaching practice activities due to the absence of an effective transformation mechanism between "identification" and "action." This situation manifests on three distinct levels.

First, there is a "structural deficiency" in capability. The transformation of red culture into teaching practice is a complex task involving multiple dimensions, such as narrative reconstruction and interdisciplinary integration. Most teachers lack these capabilities, generally lacking systematic training and practical experience in "organically integrating" red culture with subject knowledge.

Second, there is "path ambiguity" in teaching scenarios. Teachers report a lack of "transferable pathways" and "reference paradigms" for integrating red culture into their subjects. Red culture education often remains at a formalistic level, with insufficient coupling to subject objectives. Consequently, teachers find it difficult to naturally integrate red culture into their teaching, often resulting in forced additions or mere formalism.

Third, there is "undervaluation" within evaluation mechanisms. Under the current system prioritizing academic performance and admission rates, the outcomes of red culture education are difficult to quantify and make visible. Teachers invest significant effort in this area but find it hard to gain corresponding recognition, leading to an imbalanced state of "high input – low output," which weakens their motivation for practice.

4.3 Structural causes of competence anxiety and the "fragmented" dilemma of the support system

Teachers' "competence anxiety" does not stem from individual deficiencies; rather, it is a psychological manifestation of insufficient systemic support. Furthermore, the current support system related to this area exhibits pronounced "fragmentation."

First, the training system is "decontextualized." Many current trainings primarily adopt formats like centralized lectures and expert seminars, focusing on interpreting policy concepts, yet lacking differentiation based on subjects, school levels, and teachers' developmental stages.

Second, resource supply is "scattered." Red culture teaching resources lack systematic integration, causing teachers to spend excessive time and effort on lesson preparation. The development of digital resource platforms lags, and teaching tools are scarce, limiting innovation.

Third, collaborative mechanisms are "shallow." Cooperation between schools and red culture sites often takes the form of one-off activities, lacking institutionalized and normalized mechanisms. Consequently, teachers find it difficult to obtain

sustained support, leading to a state akin to "fighting alone" in their professional development.

Fourth, the teaching-research community is "weak." Red culture education should involve interdisciplinary collaborative teaching research. However, current school-based teaching research activities are organized by subject as the basic unit, lacking the necessary institutional arrangements and professional guidance. This prevents the effective sharing, joint resolution, and mutual enhancement of experiences, challenges, and innovative ideas arising from teachers' practices.

In summary, there exists a paradox of "high emotion but low practice" in secondary school teachers' red culture literacy. Fundamentally, this paradox arises from a misalignment between the support system for teacher professional development and the targeted structure of red culture education. Teachers' emotional identification with red culture can provide motivation for educational activities, but due to the lack of corresponding knowledge reserves, competency support, and institutional safeguards, the existing willingness to pass on the tradition struggles to translate effectively into high-quality practical action.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study surveyed 3,557 secondary school teachers in Shanxi Province, revealing a "structural tension" in their red culture literacy. These teachers exhibit a high degree of similarity in aspects such as emotional identification, demonstrating a solid foundational base of support. However, shortcomings exist in cognitive depth and the professionalism of teaching practice, accompanied by widespread competence anxiety. This indicates that the key to enhancing teachers' red culture literacy lies not in "awakening their awareness" or "igniting their emotional enthusiasm," but rather in focusing on constructing support mechanisms that facilitate the successful transformation of emotional identification into professional competence.

Based on the conclusions drawn, this study proposes enhancement strategies that can serve as references for regional education, school-level implementation, and teacher development.

5.1 Construct an institutional support system integrating "standards – collaboration – supervision"

Formulate a provincial-level "Action Plan for Enhancing Secondary School Teachers' Red Literacy," clearly defining the connotations, objectives, and evaluation criteria of red literacy, and incorporate it into the framework for teacher professional development. Categorize literacy into "foundational" and "developmental" types to establish a progressive, tiered enhancement pathway.

Establish a mechanism for collaborative advancement involving "schools – local authorities – cultural heritage sites – research institutions," promoting institutional cooperation between schools, red culture sites, university research institutes, and local party history departments. Implement a "dual-appointment system," inviting docents and experts to participate in training and curriculum development. Establish a certification system, making field-based study a mandatory component of professional development, thereby promoting the effective utilization of red resources beyond mere "research-oriented learning."

Strengthen school-level implementation, supervision, and evaluation. Integrate red culture education into school development plans and annual assessments. Clarify the responsibilities of principals as the primary responsible parties, establish a dedicated supervision system, and regularly evaluate implementation to solidify red culture education as a "hard constraint."

5.2 Construct a professional support system integrating "resources – curriculum – platform"

Systematically develop a "Red Culture Education Resource Package Series," categorized by school level and subject, containing teaching designs, courseware materials, and other components. This will establish a "ready-to-use + adaptable" lesson preparation system. Particularly strengthen development for non-humanities and non-social studies subjects, providing specific examples and templates for integrating red culture with subjects like mathematics, physics, and art.

Construct a provincial-level digital red culture resource library and virtual experience platform, integrating digital resources from red culture sites across the province, and develop digital tools like VR tours to transcend spatial and temporal constraints. This platform can support teacher co-creation and sharing, actively encouraging teachers to upload cases, thus forming a virtuous cycle of resources.

Encourage the development of school-based curricula and characteristic practical activities. Establish a "Special Funding for School-Based Red Culture Curriculum Development" to support schools in developing distinctive curricula based on local resources. Establish review and promotion

mechanisms, integrating high-quality curricula into the provincial platform, gradually forming a favorable landscape characterized by "one school, one brand; regional collaboration."

5.3 Construct a motivational mechanism integrating "evaluation – incentive – leadership"

Incorporate the outcomes of red culture education into teacher evaluation systems and professional title assessments. Consider red culture teaching practices and curriculum development as important evaluation dimensions. Experiment with setting "Red Education Special Performance" indicators to recognize teachers who excel in relevant areas.

Establish multi-level teaching competition and demonstration platforms. Regularly organize quality lesson evaluations, teaching design competitions, and other events related to red culture, providing platforms for teachers to communicate and learn from one another. Publicize and promote award-winning outcomes to create exemplary models, thereby stimulating teachers' motivation for professional growth.

Cultivate provincial-level "Famous Red Education Teacher Studios." Select backbone teachers with high literacy and strong capabilities in red culture education to form these studios, undertaking functions such as curriculum development. Use a mechanism where "famous teachers mentor backbone teachers, and backbone teachers mentor the wider teaching staff" to build a professional red culture teaching force.

Enhancing secondary school teachers' red culture literacy is a task that embodies both value guidance and professional development. Building upon the foundation of emotional identification, it is essential to focus on addressing key issues related to cognition and practice, thereby advancing red culture education from merely "entering ears and hearts" to "entering teaching and practice," ultimately achieving the ultimate goal of educating students.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this work.

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