

# ***Ethical Regulation for Normal Universities to Narrate the New-Era Chinese Teacher Education Story: Building a Powerful Education Country as Context***

## ***——A Case Study of Shaanxi Normal University's "Western Red Candle Spirit" in College Students' Ideological and Political Education***

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**Keywords:** Western Red Candle Spirit; Narrative Ethics; Ideological and Political Education

**Abstract:** This study examines ethical value propositions based on narrative ethics, using the integration of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" of Shaanxi Normal University into college students' ideological and political education as a case study. It investigates the value isomorphism of macro-level social ethical narratives, meso-level regional ethical narratives, and micro-level university spirit narratives. This provides a referential and innovative path for Shaanxi universities to carry out precise, localized, and immersive ideological and political education.

### **1. Introduction**

In July 2019, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Shaanxi Normal University, the connotation of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" of Shaanxi Normal University was announced. In the course of running the university, Shaanxi Normal University has been rooted in the west, serving the west, and contributing to the education of the western part of the motherland. Generations of teachers and students of Shaanxi Normal University have continued to struggle in an ordinary but great journey, forming the unique "Western Red Candle Spirit" of Shaanxi Normal University.

"The Spirit of the Western Red Candle" serves as an important manifestation of Shaanxi Normal University's spirit, ethos, and heritage, playing a unique role in ideological and moral education within the university's educational practice of fostering virtue through education. Strengthening the promotion and cultivation of the "Spirit of the Western Red Candle" among young college students at Shaanxi Normal University is an important way to promote patriotism, cultivate lofty ideals and beliefs, and establish correct values and personality.

"The spirit of the Western Red Candle" is the spiritual core unique to the spirit, temperament, and heritage of Shaanxi Normal University. It is an important force in the spiritual lineage of

socialist universities in China, and it vividly echoes and confirms the spiritual core of the Chinese spiritual lineage and socialist core values. Deeply exploring the spiritual connotation of "the spirit of the Western Red Candle" and seeking the theoretical and practical cultivation paths of ideological and political education of "the spirit of the Western Red Candle" has unique ideological and moral educational value.

## **2. The Spiritual Connotation and Identification Significance of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

### **2.1 Definition of the Connotation of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

In July 2019, Shaanxi Normal University Propaganda Department, in the "Notice on the Announcement of the Connotation of the 'Western Red Candle Spirit'," defined the "Western Red Candle Spirit" as: "Rooted in the West, dedicated to contribution, pursuing excellence, and serving the country through education." Rooted in the West represents a patriotic sentiment of loyalty to the motherland and commitment to responsibility; dedicated to contribution represents a noble quality of indifference to fame and fortune, and no regrets; pursuing excellence represents a striving character of scaling peaks and striving for first-class; serving the country through education represents a value pursuit of unwavering commitment to education and remaining true to the original aspiration. The "Western Red Candle Spirit" is a concrete manifestation of the great national spirit and the spirit of the times in our university, and it is a spirit of patriotism, a spirit of struggle, a spirit of perseverance, and a spirit of dedication.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **2.2 Understanding the Significance of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

Incorporating the "Western Red Candle Spirit" into the dimension of students' ideological and political education, as an important material and link in constructing students' moral system and value chain, means that the "Western Red Candle Spirit" should not be limited to its uniqueness, but should deeply explore the universality and transcendence of the "Western Red Candle Spirit." The great national spirit and the spirit of the times embodied in the "Western Red Candle Spirit" should also be more fully explored and promoted. Therefore, the research should place the "Western Red Candle Spirit" in the dimension of the Chinese spirit spectrum and the spirit spectrum of Chinese socialist universities for understanding and interpretation. The Chinese spirit has its spiritual commonality in different periods and fields, that is, the unity of patriotism as the core and the national spirit and the spirit of the times with reform and innovation as the core. The spirit of Chinese socialist universities is the condensation and expression of the "Chinese spirit" in the field of education. "The university spirit is a civilized achievement in the form of a unique spiritual temperament formed in the existence and development of the university itself. It is the era symbol and specific condensation of the scientific spirit, and the advanced form of the entire human social civilization." The connotation of university spirit is rich, reflecting the national spirit and the spirit of the times, including the humanistic spirit, academic spirit, and scientific spirit."<sup>[2]</sup> The "Western Red Candle Spirit" is an important part of the rich connotation and spirit of Chinese socialist universities. Therefore, in the ideological and political education dimension, the research and practice of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" should grasp the characteristics, universality, and transcendence of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" from the progressive genus relationship of "Chinese Spirit" - "Chinese Socialist University Spirit" - "Western Red Candle Spirit", and seek the greatest social recognition of the "Western Red Candle Spirit".

## 2.3 Significance of Carrying out "Western Red Candle Spirit" Identity Education among Young College Students

From the perspective of ideological and political education, the essence of the cultivation of 'western red candle spirit' is to carry out the value identity education of 'western red candle spirit' among young students, so as to promote the cultivation of campus culture and the connotation and characteristic development of ideological and political education in Shaanxi Normal University<sup>[3]</sup>.

First, carrying out the identity education of 'Western Red Candle Spirit' is an important form of encouraging young students to carry forward the 'Western Red Candle Spirit' and honor the patriotic education of the school. The 'western red candle spirit' condenses the history of the establishment of the normal university and the history of the continuous struggle and sacrifice of the generations of the normal university. It has played an important role in the period of anti-Japanese and national salvation, the period of new China's founding, the period of reform and rejuvenating the country, and the period of contemporary power, and has assumed an important mission in different periods. The western red candle spirit formed by loyalty, dedication and responsibility can only be widely recognized and promoted in order to truly integrate into the blood of Shaanxi Normal University students and become a broad value pursuit. Secondly, the identity education of 'Western Candle Spirit' is also an important carrier of university culture cultivation. Yuan Guiren pointed out that 'in a certain sense, the university is culture. The process of education and teaching in universities is essentially a purposeful and planned cultural process. The so-called teaching, management, service and environment education are all cultural education.'<sup>1</sup>Yuan Guiren. Strengthening the study of university culture and promoting the construction of university culture. As a cultural symbol of Shaanxi Normal University, which originates from history and stands in reality, it can reflect Shaanxi Normal University's ability to vividly reproduce the historical tradition of the school, profoundly explain the cultural heritage of the school, and accurately convey the essence, mission and responsibility of the school. It is a systematic, complete and distinct carrier of university culture, excavate and carry forward its spiritual connotation, inherit and innovate its connotation form. It can lay a distinct background for the construction of campus culture in Shaanxi Normal University. Thirdly, carrying out the identity education of "Western Red Candle Spirit" among young students is an innovative form of innovating ideological and political education methods and realizing "pan-precision ideological and political education." The patriotic spirit, the spirit of hard work, the spirit of responsibility, the spirit of sacrifice and dedication, and the spirit of exploration and innovation contained in the 'western red candle spirit' are important contents of ideological and political education. They provide vivid cases for ideological and political education, which are in line with students' professional growth, value pursuit, school culture and mission positioning, and become a bond between ideological and political education and schools and students. It can fully radiate the vitality of ideological and political education, make the ideological and cultural construction of schools fit the society of the times, close to students, and realize the precise ideological and political model with the characteristics and symbols of Shaanxi Normal University.

## 3. The Ideological and Educational Value of the "Western Red Candle Spirit"

### 3.1 Patriotic Sentiment Education of "Western Red Candle Spirit"

The connotation of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" is expressed as "rooted in the west, dedicated to selfless contribution, pursuing excellence, and serving the country through education." Among them, "rooted in the west" and "serving the country through education" clearly embody the patriotic core of the "Western Red Candle Spirit." President You Xuqun said at the 2019 freshmen

commencement ceremony of Shaanxi Normal University, "From the moment of its establishment, Shaanxi Normal University has taken serving the country and national development as its responsibility and mission. Serving the country through education has always been the spiritual foundation of us 'Shia people.'" In the 75-year history of Shaanxi Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University has shared weal and woe with the country, resonated with the ups and downs of the national destiny, and rooted itself in the west to dedicate itself to the cause of basic education, which embodies the great patriotic spirit and selfless overall concept. These are the valuable patriotic wealth of the "Western Red Candle Spirit." In students' patriotic education, the patriotic core nurtured by the "Western Red Candle Spirit" has generated emotional connection and resonance with Shaanxi Normal University students, enhanced students' value identity, and thus promoted their conscious value practice.

### **3.2 Ideal and Belief Value Education of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

"The 'Western Red Candle Spirit' embodies the professional, moral, and political ideals of generations of faculty and students of Shaanxi Normal University who have taken root in grassroots communities and the western region, dedicating themselves to the nation through education. The 'Western Red Candle Spirit' is the product of successive generations of faculty, students, and staff of Shaanxi Normal University engaging in practical training, and it possesses its own vivid practicality. The 'belief in strengthening the country through education' within the 'Western Red Candle Spirit' has been continuously tempered through the difficult periods of resisting Japan and saving the nation, and building the new China. Its practicality has been continuously verified, its contemporary connotation has been continuously updated and demonstrated, and its transcendence has also inspired faculty, students, and staff to continuously forge ahead." Therefore, the power of ideals and beliefs manifested in the 'Western Red Candle Spirit' has also become the 'spiritual calcium' in guiding students' thoughts and values.

### **3.3 Dedication Spirit Education of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

"Red candle" is often used as a metaphor for teachers, whose positions are ordinary and common, but whose mission and value of "teaching those who teach others, and nurturing those who become talented" are extraordinary. In the history of Shaanxi Normal University, batches of "red candles" have been cultivated, some working silently and some enjoying fame in the educational field, all of whom have been diligent, dedicated, and devoted. The famous expert in classical literature and literary theorist Shaanxi Normal University Songlin often said in his later years, "In my life, I have done three things around literature: reading, teaching, and writing." In his old age, he wrote the moving poem "Happy to nurture talents and forget old age, with lush peach blossoms and beautiful plums competing for fragrance," vividly illustrating the noble character of dedication. As a spiritual symbol of dedication, the "Western Red Candle Spirit" should be deeply explored and widely disseminated for its educational significance and value, becoming a banner for students' professional ethics and value choices. Shaanxi Normal University has cultivated batches of outstanding talents for the western education cause. "Western Red Candle, Two Generations of Teachers" has become the spiritual glory and behavioral model of Shaanxi Normal University people. After graduation, batches of young students go to the grassroots to work, strive and struggle in the places where the motherland needs them, and make contributions in ordinary positions.

### **3.4 Striving and Enterprising Character Education of "Western Red Candle Spirit"**

In 1944, the Shaanxi Provincial Normal College, the predecessor of Shaanxi Normal University,

was born amidst the smoke of the Anti-Japanese War, shouldering the national mission of saving the country. In 1954 and 1960, the school was renamed Xi'an Normal College and Shaanxi Normal University respectively, cultivating outstanding teachers for the construction of New China. In the early days of reform and opening up, the development of the times endowed Shaanxi Normal University with new missions and responsibilities, and Shaanxi Normal University became one of the normal universities directly under the Ministry of Education. Entering the 21st century, Shaanxi Normal University has successively been listed as a key construction university of the "Project 211" and a "world-class discipline construction university." The striving character of pursuing excellence, scaling new heights, and striving for first-class is also a true portrayal of the "Western Red Candle Spirit". The university has fully explored and promoted it in ideological and political education for college students, and it has also become the background color of the spiritual temperament of young students at Shaanxi Normal University.

#### **4. Cultivation Path of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" from the Perspective of Narrative Ethics**

##### **4.1 Taking perceptual identity as the starting point, do a good job in system construction and research communication**

"'Identification' originates from the Latin word *idem* (meaning the same), including objectively existing similarities and identities, pointing to consistency in psychological understanding and the social relations formed as a result." Identification as a concept emphasizes the commonality of identification, that is, the subject's recognition, acceptance, and conversion"<sup>[4]</sup>. Conducting "identification" education in students' ideological and political education follows the process of ideological and political education and the general law of moral internalization, namely the general process of emotion-cognition-will-behavior. In this process, "perceptual identification" is the logical starting point. The ethical approach based on narrative ethics first requires telling a common ethical narrative, which is a value proposition based on "perceptual identification." Therefore, in the cultivation approach of the "Western Red Candle Spirit," the school fully explores and organizes the historical materials of the "Western Red Candle Spirit," and constructs a consistent historical clue to its spiritual core, that is, telling the story of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" that belongs to Shaanxi Normal University to enhance students' identity and emotional identification. Secondly, it is necessary to do a good job in group positioning and precise dissemination. The "Western Red Candle Spirit" has extensive meanings and connotations. To give full play to its guiding and resonant role, it is necessary to seek the convergence point between the "Western Red Candle Spirit" and different youth groups and different stages of youth group growth. For example, in talent cultivation, from the perspective of the needs of students in different academic stages from freshman to senior year, compile stories that reflect different spiritual cores and conduct precise guidance education for students with different needs. At the same time, the professional differences between the school's normal students and non-normal students also make them have different acceptance dimensions of the "Western Red Candle Spirit." As the university spirit of Shaanxi Normal University that unites consensus, the "Western Red Candle Spirit" also fully values the story system and discourse system when lecturing to normal and non-normal students, and brings closer the emotional distance with different students<sup>[5]</sup>.

##### **4.2 Taking value identity as the core, do a good job in building spiritual and cultural atmosphere and brand promotion**

The value identity is the essence of the 'western red candle spirit' to play the function of



educating people. Therefore, in the dissemination of the western red candle spirit, we can not start from the educational appearance, and are satisfied with preaching and piling up. As an educational activity with strong ideological content, the propaganda and education of ideological and political education must have its generation logic and theoretical interpretation. Ideological and political education should fully integrate the theoretical advantages of ideological and political teachers, the advantages of student counselors' understanding of the cognitive characteristics of young students, and the experience and emotional advantages of "five old" professors accompanying the growth of the school, and carry out a detailed theoretical explanation around the "western red candle spirit." Its historical reasons, connotation of the times, practical requirements, and theoretical logic are further demonstrated. Under the realistic situation of multiple information intersection, multicultural symbiosis, and multiple values, it provides a unified theoretical basis for young students' recognition of the western red candle spirit and improves the rational understanding of the western red candle spirit. At the same time, we should attach importance to the role of model guidance, select the benchmark figures reflecting the 'western red candle spirit' in different eras and different fields, give full play to the demonstration and leading role of model, and promote the creation of atmosphere. In addition, based on the cultivation of the 'western red candle spirit', we will vigorously create campus cultural brand activities that reflect the western red candle spirit, cultivate a value community of the 'western red candle spirit' with different activities as the carrier, and promote the value identity of the 'western red candle spirit' of young students from multiple perspectives.

#### **4.3 Taking behavior identity as the goal, do a good job in practice channel development and behavior guidance**

The great spirit should be tested by vivid practice, and the leading and driving role of spirit can only be realized through practice. The cultivation effect of the 'western red candle spirit' must be directed to the students' behavior practice. From the perspective of behavior identity, the school provides students with a channel to practice the 'western red candle spirit'. Through voluntary activities, summer social practice and ideological and political practice courses, all available students' practical activities run through the value pursuit of the 'western red candle spirit', and implement the perceptual identity and value identity to the students' behavior identity, which is confirmed and rejuvenated in social practice. From the perspectives of students' daily study and life, voluntary service, career planning and employment choice, the behavior identity of the 'western red candle spirit' is tested, and the significance and value of the 'western red candle spirit' are stirred and exemplified from practice, which is internalized into the value pursuit of young students in Shaanxi Normal University.

#### **5. Conclusions**

In essence, the educational practice of the "Western Red Candle Spirit" is a response to the times regarding the original aspiration of "cultivating talents for the nation and nurturing talents for the country". With culture as a link, it closely connects the mission and responsibility of normal universities with the strategic goal of building an education power. It injects spiritual motivation into the cultivation of educational talents for the western region who are "willing to go, able to stay, and good at teaching", and also provides a replicable and promotable practical model for universities in the new era to innovate ideological and political education based on their characteristic culture.

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