

# Reflections on the Current Situation of Life Education at Colleges and Universities

Yueqing Wang<sup>1</sup>, Rongrong Fang<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Liberal Arts, Journalism and Communication, Sanjiang University, Nanjing, China*

<sup>2</sup>*Physical Education Department, Sanjiang University, Nanjing, China*

\*Corresponding author: ggo8088@163.com

**Abstract:** *Life education has always been an important research topic in college education. Especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19, people have paid more attention to life and health issues, thought about the value of life, and began to reflect on life issues and pay attention to life education. At the same time, the epidemic has also exposed the problem of many college students' disregard for life. Therefore, reflecting on the current situation of life education at colleges and universities can help us analyze the reasons for the lack of life education in universities, assist educators in doing a good job in life education, and help students overcome life difficulties.*

**Keywords:** *colleges and universities; college students; life education*

## 1. Introduction

The issue of “the essence of life” has been hotly discussed since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and there are still many unsolved mysteries and controversies in various research fields related to life. In his 2023 New Year’s speech, CPC’s president pointed out: “The century-long changes are accelerating and the world is not peaceful.” The ecological environment on which human beings rely for survival is in crisis. In 2020, the global COVID-19 broke out, tens of millions of people lost their precious lives, and people began to re-understand the ecological environment on which they rely for survival. In 2022, the Russo Ukrainian War broke out, and international relations were strained. Traditional and non-traditional security threats such as arms competition, terrorism, and cybersecurity were intertwined. People from all walks of life began to contemplate the social environment and rethink the value and significance of human life.

College students, who receive higher cultural education, serve as the main force of social development in the new era. Especially in the current information and digital era, with various temptations, there is a significant gap in the life cognition of college students, and there are some life cognition problems that urgently need to be clarified and changed by educators at colleges and universities.

## 2. Connotations of Life Education

At present, most basic education courses focus on student safety and psychological education for life education. Most researchers in the field of life education pay more attention to life education in the basic education stage, while the content and practice of life education in the higher education stage are relatively few. The connotation of life education in academia is also a frequently debated topic, but the connotations of life education in universities are scattered in some academic journal articles and limited works[1].

As the name suggests, life education is about life, and the basic stage of life education aims to guide students to understand, cherish, and respect life. The life education in the higher education stage guides students to cherish and respect life, while also acquiring the ability to improve their own quality of life, enhancing their ability to withstand pressure and setbacks, guiding them to pay attention to their own happiness index, understand the value and significance of life, and transform the utilitarian campus competition environment into a benign, harmonious, and common development environment [2].

### **3. Current Situation of College Students' Life**

#### ***3.1 A Utilitarian Attitude towards Life***

In the "Internet plus era", college students' online fraud, online loans, college students' suicide and other events are frequently exposed. Short online videos and addiction to online games often make college students easy to ignore the nature of things in life. During the three-year epidemic period, many college students' disregard for life was exposed, which generally reflects their outlook on life. Especially after the epidemic, many college students' pursuit of higher education exudes a strong utilitarianism: the pursuit of stable jobs, such as obtaining civil service and teacher staffing; making more money and gaining greater power. Many courses at colleges and universities are not directly related to students' utilitarian goals and needs. Some students will showcase their utilitarian aspects in their studies and life in order to obtain a satisfactory job as a civil servant, such as striving for excellence, emotional and interpersonal problems caused by party member evaluations; Some students have the concept of "knowledge is useless", believing that attending college is only to obtain a graduation certificate and diploma [3].

The dilemma of life education for college students lies in how much money a person can earn and how much material wealth and rights they possess, which often bring varying degrees of life problems to students. In life education, we need to help college students re-examine the utilitarianism learning concept, understand that the essence of education is to improve people's life quality, promote the all-round development of self, enrich the spiritual world, and make us become "a fully-developed person" with high cultural quality, sound personality, ideals and morality [4].

#### ***3.2 Lack of Life Concept***

Influenced by social utilitarianism values, university education also shows a "utilitarian tendency" to meet the needs of economic and social development. Much is invested in most practical majors at colleges and universities, emphasizing practical skills training and upgrading, ignoring the humanities that enrich and conserve life. The school always pays attention to employment rate and the improvement of students' skills, but they seldom teach students "how to live", and fail to guide students to think "why to live, how to live, and how to behave". Behind utilitarian education is a lack of humanistic spirit, neglecting life emotions and experiences. Although students have the ability and skills, their life experiences are becoming less and less, and they are losing rich emotions, responsibilities, and love. Life education is for every individual, aiming to improve the quality of life and promote comprehensive and healthy growth of life.

#### ***3.3 Spiritual Emptiness***

Rational utilitarianism makes college students attach importance to the means to achieve goals, but they cannot obtain life goals and meanings. Without ideal beliefs and goals as spiritual support, college students are easily lost in the materialistic world to avoid the emptiness of the spiritual world. Many students have no goals and no fun in life, and they are addicted to online games and entertainment programs, resulting in feelings of emptiness and restlessness. Some students even suffer from depression, which makes them confused and disoriented.

#### ***3.4 Low Happiness Index***

Feeling happiness requires the ability to feel happiness, first and foremost, cognitive ability, and the pursuit of reflection on the meaning, way, and content of human existence. And our college students cannot understand and discover happiness at an important crossroads in life. Secondly, experiencing happiness also requires the ability to experience, as experiencing happiness reflects a person's attitude towards the world, humanity, and oneself. Most students grow up in the love of their families, with superior material living conditions, and even parents from impoverished families are frugal to ensure that their children have no worries about food and clothing. As a result, students are unable to face difficulties in life and study, handle dormitory conflicts, face others and various temptations with a rational attitude, and lack the ability to experience. At the same time, students who feel happy also need to have the ability to be grateful. Only with a heart of gratitude can a person have happiness, gain healthy emotions and further experience the value and significance of life. However, at present, some college students have a strong sense of purpose, and there is a lack of spiritual collision in peer

communication and teacher-student communication, leading to insufficient depth in life communication and weak ability to feel life and be grateful [5].

#### **4. Current Situation of Life Education at Colleges and Universities**

Life education in China started late and lacked concepts. Especially in the field of life education at colleges and universities, there are multiple obstacles: a lack of unified guidance standards, most universities have not carried out life education, and schools that carry out life education have not independently set up “life education” courses; lack of professional teaching staff. Researchers focus more on basic safety education in primary and secondary schools than on life education in universities. Throughout academic research, there are many analyses and path explorations on the current situation of life education in universities at the macro level, while there is relatively little research on life education in universities at the micro level.

##### ***4.1 Insufficient Understanding of Life Education***

Life education at colleges and universities is in its early stages of development, and daily ideological and political education for students is usually handled by counselors. Leaders of colleges and universities do not understand life education or consider it a formal content, and do not understand that life education is a long-term and systematic education system that requires the participation of teachers and students. They only believe that daily reminders and management can be done through counselors, such as emphasizing to students the superficial preaching work of “obeying laws and regulations” and “preventing fraud”. The guidance work of life education in universities lacks full participation of all staff and incorporates existing resources into life education based on life oriented thinking, which cannot help students understand and master the connotation of life education.

##### ***4.2 Weak Life Education Foundation at Colleges and Universities with Unsound Curriculum System***

Some colleges and universities lack the concept of life education and only focus on students’ safety, psychological and other issues, lacking practical guidance on life education. There is a lack of teaching staff for life education, and it is difficult for ideological and political teachers to carry out practical activities in life education due to the lack of theoretical teaching work; There is a gap between psychological health guidance teachers helping students to alleviate psychological problems and cope with psychological crises, and comprehensive life education; Counselors have a lot of contact with students, understand student dynamics, and are entangled in complex daily affairs, but they lack professional life education guidance and training. How to balance the role of universities as the main battlefield is the first issue to be addressed in life education, and on this basis, a collaborative life education system consisting of universities, governments, society, and families should be formed.

##### ***4.3 Lack of Death Education***

Hegel said, “Life contains the seeds of death. In human life, life and death are both opposing levels and a dialectical unity.” Xunzi proposed in his “Treatise on Rites”: “Life is the beginning of a person; death is the end of a person. All things are good at the beginning, and humanity is completed.” Thinking about the relationship between human life and death reduces many struggles and confusions in life. Constructing and guiding students to establish a scientific view of death, recognizing the preciousness of life, and cherishing their own and others’ lives is the starting point for improving the quality of students’ lives. At present, when dealing with the issue of college students’ lives, we have found that students are influenced by the traditional “concept of life and death” and avoid discussing the issue of life and death, unable to face the issue of death.

##### ***4.4 Lack of Esteem Education***

Education aims to awaken students’ spirituality, humanity, and thinking, shape a complete personality, and thus preserve love, optimism, honesty, positive effort, brave response, and full of hope. A complete personality is not innate, but honed through repeated trials and tribulations. Under the value orientation of utilitarianism, in pursuit of improving the quality of material life from the perspective of high scores, parents deprive students of the opportunity to experience life setbacks in the name of love. It is difficult for students to recognize and face setbacks, and there is no joy to further understand

themselves after overcoming setbacks. College counselors often rely on personal cognition and charm to influence students through persuasion and comfort for students who encounter difficulties, lacking professional life education and training. They cannot fundamentally provide personality education to students and solve their life difficulties.

The classic Chinese traditional culture, the Book of Changes, proposes that the great virtue of heaven and earth is called life, which fully affirms the value of life, reflecting that Chinese culture regards the creation of life as the noblest virtue in the universe. Both Confucianism and Taoism start from the ontology of life, pondering the essence of life, questioning the value of life, and expressing sincere love for life. In the digital era, universities are building a new curriculum system for life education, enriching the path of life education through practical research, and helping more students solve life problems.

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