

# The Value, Essence, and Strategies for the Normalization of Life Values Education among University Students

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**Abstract:** *The normalization development of life values education among university students is a key initiative for continuously achieving the scientification of life education theory and practice. Advancing the normalization of "life values" education continuously guides university students to establish correct ideological and cognitive concepts as well as a sense of spiritual and cultural values, thereby ensuring that they can generate more contributory values to society in the process of future personal value development. This, in turn, promotes the favourable development of Chinese society in many aspects.*

**Keywords:** *Life values education, University students, Normalization*

## 1. Introduction

Since the introduction of life education to China in the 1980s, life values education in domestic universities has made significant progress, yet there remain some deficiencies. Firstly, there is an insufficiency in the research on the long-term mechanisms for normalization of education. The main issue lies in the top-down and inside-out control over direction, while also giving sufficient emphasis to the safeguarding roles of systems and organizational structures. To some extent, this involves guiding and regulating individuals' value concepts and behaviors through material forces, aiming to control complex and constantly changing factors solely through institutional and mechanistic constructions. Secondly, there is a lack of emphasis on normalized education. The necessity of normalized education has not been sufficiently recognized; it is pursued deliberately without being seen as an actively adaptable state to specific and special circumstances. Lastly, there is inadequate research on strategies for normalized education. There is a mere requirement for rationally seeking and grasping the theoretical aspects of university students' life values education and exploring the fundamental laws of practice activity development, but the specific knowledge reflecting these laws is not applied in practical work. Therefore, this article plans to conduct an in-depth analysis and study on the normalization of life values education among university students, in hopes of perfecting the theory of life values education and promoting the development of practice.

## 2. The Value Connotation of Normalization in Life Values Education among University Students

Life values education has been responsive to societal needs since its inception. During the American economic crisis from 1929 to 1933, affected by the Great Depression, people struggled with their lives, lost confidence, leading to an increase in harm to others, suicides, and various crimes. In this context, scholars represented by Waller responded to societal needs by proposing the concept of life education, thereby guiding students to correctly understand the meaning of life. After World War II, the German people, due to the guilt of losing the war and initiating an unjust war, fell into confusion about their ideals and beliefs. The public's confusion about their faith in the nation and society led to moral decay and a crisis of belief. In response to this phenomenon, Germany actively carried out life education to alleviate social problems.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact, posing severe challenges to healthcare, education, food safety, and grassroots management worldwide. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as a public health event has its randomness, with many people being affected materially and spiritually by the epidemic, leading to a deeper understanding of the fragility of life. The

pandemic has triggered reflections on the way society operates and made everyone realize the preciousness and fragility of life, underscoring the responsibility and obligation of each individual to contribute to the continuity of life. This crisis not only presents a significant challenge to life values education for university students but also offers opportunities for the normalization of such education. The impact of events like the COVID-19 pandemic on life values is a long-term process that continuously guides university students to establish natural, social, and spiritual life values. Therefore, events like the pandemic have brought considerable attention to life values education among university students and provided a broader prospect for its development, aiding in the normalization of this educational content.

Regarding societal development, China has deconstructed the traditional cultural construction of the meaning of life in the process of modernization. People living in this societal transformation have begun to lose the return to the support of value resources and meaning for life activities, leading to a profound spiritual crisis and a lack of life value consciousness. "Money supremacy" has become the worldview and value orientation for many, which is inseparable from a period of unhealthy social atmosphere. Meanwhile, in a market economy society, the supremacy of grades has also increasingly attracted attention. Under the drive of instrumental rationality, "utilitarian" values have emerged. Pursuing high income has become a goal of life, constantly striving for profit objectives. From a narrow perspective, the expansion of utilitarian behavior is inevitable, and the pursuit of the value and meaning of life is unavoidable. This has led modern university students to develop their "livelihood" skills while seeking survival but losing the pursuit of life values. To better align with China's current development needs, the normalization of life values education has been integrated into China's education system and received adequate attention. Teaching life values in university classrooms can guide students to mold their views on life in a positive and healthy direction and further strengthen their understanding of life.

### **3. Approaches to Constructing a Normalization Mechanism for Life Values Education among University Students**

In 1997, Professor Ye Lan first proposed the concept of life education, suggesting that classroom teaching be seen as a meaningful part of the important life journey of teachers and students from the perspective of life's height and dynamic generation<sup>[1]</sup>. Life education is a comprehensive education centered around human life, including knowledge of life safety and physical and mental health, characterized by its multidimensionality, depth, and broad coverage<sup>[2]</sup>. After the introduction of life education into China, related research initially presented characteristics of rich content, diverse carriers, and a dynamic normal state. Life values education, essentially a type of comprehensive education, is composed of both values education and life education, hence possessing dual attributes in its essence. Civic values education is developed based on life education, with the goals, processes, and assessments of life values being its more significant content. Therefore, its main conceptual content is, on the basis of respecting the ontology of life, to emphasize the realization of human life value, to promote the free and comprehensive development of individuals, including education on various types of values such as natural life, social life, and spiritual life. From a content perspective, its importance in life education is self-evident; life values education is the core of life education in terms of content and objectives.

Thus, contemporary life values education for university students specifically targets this group, employing teaching methods purposefully and planfully according to the demands of social development, to deepen students' understanding of the value of life and to enhance their appreciation for it. This includes educating students to view death correctly, fostering a healthy and rational attitude towards death, and enhancing respect and care for life. Life values education for university students aims to support their quality of life and comprehensive development. With life value as the core and educational guidance as the main approach, the entire process from birth to death is essentially a process of generating life value awareness, wherein students are imbued with humanism to ensure they can perceive life value, evaluate the meaning of life reasonably, and establish life value goals appropriately.

Normalization refers to the process of returning from an abnormal state to a normal state and making this transition sustainable and routine. The usual state of a thing is its normal state, which is a consensus formed after people observe and understand something, possessing general attributes. The "ization" in normalization represents a state with dynamic properties, showcasing human agency, creativity, and control. Agency and creativity are often present in a normalized environment, while control is manifested in the pursuit of stability. To some extent, normalization refers to the original state

of things, equivalent to their essential attributes, belonging to the category of ontology at the theoretical level<sup>[3]</sup>.

In most cases, humans equate the normal state with the norm because the normal state appears frequently in daily life and has characteristics of commonality, everydayness, universality, and longevity. If a situation deviates from the norm, it indicates an abnormal condition, and the emergence of abnormalities also signifies an increase in uncontrollable factors. Mastering the norm means being able to recognize and utilize patterns, with human subjectivity being manifested through this process. By pursuing and applying the norm, humans can direct the development of things towards desired outcomes. This development can be positive and long-term. Normalization implies that things are developing in a stable state, and this state is widespread. Thus, both actual and ideal states can be considered normal.

The scientific development and practice of life values education inherently align with normalization. Life values education is not a one-time, short-term, or phase-specific endeavor but requires comprehensive, stable, long-term, and sustainable educational practices. Firstly, the natural pursuit of life development seeks the normalization of life values education. From the beginning of life, life values education is omnipresent in our lives. Human life development is a long, uninterrupted process. As individuals grow physically and mentally and as surrounding things evolve, people's life states also develop accordingly. This development necessitates the normalization of life values education. Secondly, the process of life development entails uncertainties. Life development can encounter various events at any moment, and life values cannot always respond correctly to all possible events. Each individual's reaction to the same type of event can also vary. Therefore, in the formation and practice of life values among university students, the normalization of life values education is indispensable. Lastly, the formation of these ideological concepts is a long-term and complex process. Although the ruling class has standardized and guided university students' life values, influenced by the broader social environment's negative ideologies, students' life values can occasionally deviate and fluctuate. The university period is a critical time when young people transition from passively accepting and adopting value guidance to actively exploring and critically examining values. Immersed in the social environment, university students form their understanding of life values based on their education and social influences, establish life value goals, and engage in different processes to realize life values. The long-term and complex nature of forming life values necessitates that universities guide and standardize normalization of life values education to fulfill the fundamental task of moral education.

This study believes that the normalization of life values education for university students is aimed at the university student group, matching and integrating educational content, social needs, development laws, and personal characteristics to guide this special life group. Guided by the principle of "moral education," implementing normalization education characterized by comprehensiveness, stability, long-term effectiveness, and sustainability will enhance university students' awareness of life values. This allows them to gain a deeper understanding of the value of life, helps them establish correct life value goals, and actively and optimistically realize the value of life, ultimately forming correct life values.

Normalization in the context of life values education is not just about adhering to routine or standard practices; it's about embedding these educational values into the fabric of daily academic and social activities, ensuring that the education is not episodic but an ongoing process that adapts to and reflects the evolving societal and individual needs. It emphasizes a consistent, integrated approach that aligns with broader educational objectives and societal values, aiming to prepare students not just for professional success but for a fulfilling, ethically grounded life.

This approach to life values education requires a dynamic, flexible framework that can respond to the changing realities of student lives, societal expectations, and global challenges. It involves a curriculum that is not static but evolves, incorporating new insights from research, pedagogical advancements, and the lived experiences of the educational community. It also necessitates a participatory, inclusive educational process that engages students, faculty, and the wider community in a dialogue about the meaning and importance of life values in contemporary society.

By focusing on normalization, educators and institutions commit to making life values education a central, enduring component of university education. This commitment underscores the belief that understanding and embracing life values is fundamental to personal development, academic achievement, and societal well-being. Through this sustained educational effort, students are equipped to navigate the complexities of modern life with integrity, empathy, and a deep sense of purpose, contributing positively to their communities and the world at large.

#### **4. Approaches to Constructing a Normalization Mechanism for Life Values Education among University Students**

The normalization of life values education for university students demands comprehensive, stable, long-term, and sustainable development of life values education.

Firstly, it's essential to promote the comprehensiveness of life values education among university students. This comprehensiveness reflects the essence and requirements of normalization in life values education, encompassing both the process and elements of education. It's a systematic and comprehensive project that requires coordinating educational resources from all sides, with the fundamental task of "fostering virtues through education" as its core value, encouraging students to integrate and innovate based on existing knowledge. Temporal and spatial comprehensiveness are crucial components of the comprehensive approach to life values education. As a social practice, it unfolds within specific times and spaces. To achieve timeliness and comprehensiveness, education must be integrated into the entire teaching process and students' growth. This integration within the educational process maximizes the main channel role of classroom teaching and explores life values education resources and functions in various activities, including university student organizations, social practice, lectures, and salons. Integrating into the entire growth process of students means connecting life values education from primary to higher education, covering the entire contradiction movement process of cognition, emotion, belief, intention, and action in the development of students' life values. Spatially, the concept involves integrating course content in various domains, both inside and outside the classroom and online and offline, addressing different challenges with specific goals, functions, resources, and strategies in each domain. The comprehensiveness also relates to both the educators and the subjects of education. Educators are the manpower foundation and organizational guarantee for life values education. The comprehensiveness of educators requires the involvement of all members in education activities, fulfilling their responsibilities. Educators can be interactive or exemplary. Interactive educators engage in daily educational activities, while exemplary educators, including party cadres, scholars, alumni, media personalities, and model workers, play a demonstration role, exerting a lifelong positive influence on students' life values. Comprehensive education for students demands targeted strategies for different student categories, offering personalized guidance. Content and medium comprehensiveness are also vital parts of life values education. This comprehensiveness aims for the dialectical unity between the logic of social development and individual development. Life values education should serve social construction and fulfill personal development needs, guiding students to recognize, realize, and enhance life values, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

Secondly, the endeavor to fortify the stabilization of life values education necessitates the creation of robust institutional frameworks and mechanism guarantees. This comprehensive approach encompasses the entirety of the educational process, from meticulous planning and execution to constructive feedback and continuous improvement phases. Acknowledging the diverse pathways to modernization, it becomes apparent that such standards are not monolithic but vary significantly across different national contexts. This variability underscores the imperative for life values education systems and their accompanying mechanisms to embody a dynamic nature, characterized by self-enhancement and adaptability. This adaptability is crucial in ensuring that the educational frameworks are not only responsive to the evolving societal and educational landscapes but also firmly anchored in safeguarding the fundamental interests and agency of students. In light of this, the stabilization of life values education transcends the mere establishment of structures and protocols; it demands a paradigm that is inherently flexible, capable of evolving in alignment with both global trends and local exigencies. This approach ensures that life values education remains relevant and impactful, fostering an educational environment where students are empowered to navigate their moral and ethical landscapes with confidence. By embedding these principles into the educational ethos, institutions commit to a process of continual reflection and recalibration, thereby ensuring that life values education not only addresses the immediate needs of students but also prepares them to contribute meaningfully to society. The goal is to cultivate a generation that not only excels academically but is also imbued with a deep sense of ethical responsibility and social consciousness, aligning with the broader objectives of creating a harmonious and progressive society.

Furthermore, securing long-term effectiveness in life values education requires a nuanced focus on both the scientific underpinnings and the practical implementations within the educational sphere. This involves steering students through a diverse array of educational methodologies, both immersive and subtle, to foster a deep, lifelong identification with and understanding of core life values. These methods are not limited to theoretical instruction but extend into varied, experiential learning

approaches that significantly impact students' value systems. Particularly pivotal to this approach is the emphasis on life practice education. This education model integrates real-world experiences and service-oriented practices as fundamental components of the learning process, thereby enabling students to directly engage with and internalize life values in a tangible manner. Through participation in public service initiatives and labor practices, students are not just informed about values in abstraction but are provided with opportunities to live these values, experiencing first-hand the dignity of labor and the fulfillment that comes from contributing to the community. Such experiences are invaluable, as they help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that life values education transcends the confines of the classroom to become a lived experience. Incorporating these practices into the curriculum enriches students' educational journey, making the learning process more holistic and impactful. By engaging in these activities, students develop a profound appreciation for the intrinsic worth of contributing to society and gain insights into the complexity of human experiences. This comprehensive approach ensures that life values education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about shaping individuals who are empathetic, responsible, and equipped to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the wider world. Through this sustained and integrated educational strategy, life values education aims to produce well-rounded individuals who carry forward the torch of societal progress and harmony.

Lastly, the pursuit of sustainable development in life values education for university students demands a comprehensive strategy that encompasses the modernization of educational paradigms, a dedication to fostering cohesive educational teams, the revitalization of curricular content, and the enhancement of evaluative and feedback mechanisms. This multifaceted approach emphasizes the importance of remaining attuned to the evolving needs of students and society, thereby ensuring that education in life values remains relevant, impactful, and forward-looking. To achieve this, educational concepts must undergo continual reassessment and refinement to reflect the latest advancements in pedagogical theory and practice. This involves not only embracing a student-centered approach to learning but also integrating cross-disciplinary insights that enrich students' understanding of life values in a global context. By cultivating a culture of innovation within educational teams, institutions can foster a collaborative environment where educators are encouraged to share best practices, experiment with new teaching methodologies, and collectively drive the advancement of life values education. Content renewal is another critical pillar of sustainable development in this field. As societal norms and values evolve, so too must the content that underpins life values education. This requires educators to remain abreast of current events, emerging trends, and shifts in societal attitudes, thereby ensuring that the curriculum remains dynamic, relevant, and engaging for students. Incorporating real-world issues, case studies, and contemporary moral dilemmas into the curriculum can stimulate critical thinking and facilitate deeper engagement with life values.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, the normalization of life values education for university students is not only a key measure for continuously advancing the scientification of life education theory and practice but also an important path to comprehensively improve the quality and effectiveness of education. By persistently promoting education centered on "life values," it is possible to effectively guide university students to form correct cognitive concepts and a sense of spiritual and cultural values, thereby nurturing talents with a sense of social responsibility and innovative capabilities. Such education not only aids students in better understanding themselves and society during their personal growth and value realization process but also encourages them to make greater contributions to society in their future development.

The normalization of life values education emphasizes the importance of integrating real-life scenarios and actual social issues into educational practice, enabling students to make more rational and responsible choices when faced with a complex and changing social environment. This approach deepens students' understanding of the meaning and value of life and inspires their love for life and positive exploration of the future.

Moreover, the normalization of life values education for university students requires educators to continually update their educational philosophies and methods, employing more diversified and innovative teaching strategies to meet the demands of the times. Educational institutions should establish more open and inclusive educational environments, encouraging students to actively participate in social practice activities. Through accumulating practical experience, students can further deepen their understanding and appreciation of life values.

With such comprehensive and systematic efforts, we can look forward to life values education for university students better promoting the holistic development of students in the future, contributing more significantly to the progress and prosperity of Chinese society. This not only enhances individual achievements but also plays a crucial role in promoting the overall progress of social civilization.

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