An Analysis of the Path of Life and Death Education of College Students Under the Current Education System

Jiaxin Li*, Aimin Shu, Qinglong Liu

School of Education, Tibet University, Lhasa, Tibet, China.

How to cite this paper: Jiaxin Li, Aimin Shu, Qinglong Liu. (2024). An Analysis of the Path of Life and Death Education of College Students Under the Current Education System. The Educational Review, USA, 8(5), 682-686. DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.05.006

Received: April 12, 2024
Accepted: May 9, 2024
Published: June 5, 2024

Corresponding author: Jiaxin Li, School of Education, Tibet University, Lhasa, Tibet, China.

Abstract

Life and death education has been absent in Chinese colleges and universities for a long time. In recent years, there have been frequent incidents highlighting college students' indifference to life. This has brought the true significance of life and death education back into the public eye. Such education not only aids college students in forming a proper perspective on life and death and contemplating life's meaning but also helps them recognize the value of each individual. By examining the current status of life-and-death education development both domestically and internationally, this paper outlines the challenges encountered by Chinese college students in the realm of life-and-death education. These challenges include the overshadowing of traditional culture, the neglect of family education, the absence of a school-based approach, and the inadequacy of local theories. In view of the aforementioned issues, drawing on Chinese local culture, this paper proposes recommendations from two perspectives: (1) Discipline penetration; (2) Combining traditional culture; (3) Shaping environment; (4) Integrating resources to carry out activities.

Keywords

Life and death education, College students, View of life and death

Chinese students lack education about life and death. However, life and death education is a hot topic worldwide. It is also the focus of scientific and educational research: Life and death education includes the understanding of life, the exploration of life, the thinking of the purpose of life, the cognition of death, and the reflection of the meaning of life (Ding Xiaoyu, 2023). As a form of education called to talk about "death", in fact, on life, by making the educated aware of the limited nature of life, and authenticity, establish a correct view of life and death, help the educated to understand the meaning of life, cherish life with a correct attitude, and promote the appreciation of life.

As a high-quality and high-level group, college students have strong independence, an open mind, innovative spirit, can accept new things quickly, and are also the key group of life and death education. In recent years, with the frequent occurrence of college students' suicide, violent injury, animal cruelty, and other vicious incidents, we should explore the underlying problem—the lack of life and death education. Many domestic scholars have proposed that life and death education should be carried out in the whole society of China based on the concept of life, so as to make up for the missing lesson of Chinese children and encourage individuals to better examine the meaning of life and Revere life. Based on this, this paper aims to explore the path of life and death education for college students, analyze the development status of life and death education at home and abroad and the existing problems in China and put forward the implementation strategy.
that conforms to the life and death education for Chinese college students.

1. Development status of life and death education at home and abroad

Life and death education originated in the United States, continued to develop in the middle of the 20th century, and then widely spread to other Western countries. In 1959, Herman Feifei published the first representative book on life and death education—The Meaning of Death. In 1963, Robert Fulton offered the first life and death education course at the University of Minnesota. In 1970, the first seminar on death education was held at Hamline University (Zhou Shiying, 2008). In the United States, in the 30 years from 1975 to 2005, life-and-death education developed rapidly, and the number of relevant life-and-death education courses in colleges and universities increased by 12 times, and life-and-death education was basically popularized in all medical colleges and universities (Dickinson, G. E., 2006). Japan and South Korea also emphasize life and death education. Sophia University in Japan has been holding lectures on death education since 1982 (Luo Rui, 2005). Life and death education is highly responsive in the whole society, and a large number of groups related to life and death education have been established. In 2004, Korea introduced practical training courses, such as simulated coffin experience and suspended death experience, to reflect on the meaning of life through the personal experience of death, which has been recognized worldwide (Sofka C. J., 2015).

In China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, the first to carry out the life and death education, study more deeply. In 1997, the first life-and-death research institute was established in Taiwan. In 1999, the "Institute of Life and Death" of Nanhua University in Taiwan was established, and then the "Life and Death Research Center" was also established in the Taipei College of Nursing, other universities have responded by setting up corresponding courses in life and death education, and have made it a compulsory course (Zhou Yaoyao, 2013). In Hong Kong, education and training related to life and death have been incorporated into the curriculum of many higher education institutions, and death-related issues have also been incorporated into the humanities curriculum (Zhang Huilan, 2015). Although some mainland universities in China have taken life-and-death education as elective course, such as Guangzhou University, South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou Medical College, etc. (Guo Yukun, 2009). The number is small, and there are few research reports in this field. The theoretical research and practice process of life-and-death education is still in the exploratory stage, which is worthy of in-depth exploration by scholars.

2. The main problems facing the life and death education of college students in China

2.1 The traditional culture of "rebirth and rejection of death"

Chinese traditional culture always conveys the concept of "life is greater than death", people often talk about "life", but ignore the existence of "death", people will do everything to avoid death, and the mention of "death" will produce a series of negative associations—sadness, fear, curse, ominous and so on. Under the influence of traditional culture, people are reluctant to take the initiative to contact and understand death, and the name of life and death education is more likely to cause people's prejudice and misunderstanding. It can be seen that the development and popularization of life and death education is facing huge psychological and ideological obstacles.

2.2 The avoidance of family education

The social support system for education is mainly family and school, but in Chinese family education, parents not only do not take the initiative to talk about the topic of life and death, but also take an attitude of avoiding the death phenomenon that happens around them, such as the death of relatives, and try their best to hide and protect their children from contact. For one thing, they are afraid of their fear and anxiety. Second, under the influence of traditional concepts, parents themselves lack a correct view of life and death. As the group of parents who give their children the most company, the formation of children's correct view of life and death cannot be separated from their influence. However, Chinese families generally avoid the topic of death, which makes it difficult to cultivate children's correct attitude towards death and understanding of the meaning of life. Existing studies have shown that the family never discusses death, avoids discussing death, and discusses the atmosphere of an open but unnatural education style, which makes the death attitude of college students more inclined to escape acceptance (Hu Xiaojing, 2016).

2.3 The deficiency of the school education concept

Life and death education has always been a missing link in Chinese schools. For a long time, schools have been emphasizing knowledge imparting, lacking education on people's spiritual life and the meaning of life. Driven by the concept of
utilitarian education, schools unilaterally pursue the enrollment rate and ignore the physical and mental health of individual students. This kind of knowledge-based education concept makes it difficult for students to correct their attitude towards life, and it is even more difficult for them to understand the meaning of life and think about the value of their own lives. In the current school, most students are ignorant and narrow about death, thus forming an attitude of playing with life and not paying attention to their own lives.

2.4 Lack of local theoretical system

Although life and death education in mainland China has been frowning, its development is still seriously lagging behind, not only there is no perfect theoretical system, but also the relevant books and materials are very limited, and the theoretical basis of life and death education is very weak. In terms of academic research, it mainly focuses on the analysis of children's picture books and foreign research on life and death education. On the whole, these studies have some problems, such as generalization of content, narrow research ideas, and lack of research practice.

3. Exploration of life-and-death education path for college students

3.1 Subject infiltration

The impact of death education courses on college students has been shown to help them feel more comfortable dealing with the topic of death and deal with the difficulties caused by such painful and stressful situations with competence and professionalism (Gianmarco Biancalani, 2023). Due to the influence of traditional culture, it is not easy for life and death education to become an independent course in the subject system. If it is arranged into the curriculum system too hastily, it will be more difficult and may be counterproductive. Therefore, it should influence students in a subtle way. Schools can combine life and death education with ideological and political education and mental health education according to their actual situation (Phan H P., 2023). From the perspective of curriculum and teaching, death education needs to explore issues related to death and dying. Ideological and political education aims to cultivate students to establish a correct outlook on life, world outlook, and values, in the process of carrying out ideological and political education, into the universal education related to death, not only eliminates students' fear but also helps change students' attitude to life. At the same time, relevant topics can be set up in the process of mental health education to guide students to treat death correctly from the perspectives of soothing bereavement pain preventing suicide, and improving their psychological endurance.

3.2 Combine traditional culture

Although China's traditional culture is reborn and avoids death, the resources of wisdom about life and death are relatively rich. The Confucian view of life and death with morality as the core, the Taoist view of life and death in accordance with nature, and the Buddhist view of life and death with the six paths of reincarnation all have their reasonableness and value. Based on this, we should base on our traditional culture, find the entry point of the fusion between life and death education and traditional culture, and actively explore the essence of traditional culture's life and death view, so as to enhance the effectiveness of life and death education for Chinese college students.

3.3 Environment building

People's thoughts and values are formed and developed in a certain environment, and the environment has an important impact on individual cognition and behavior. The family field is the original model of society and the original starting point of human socialization (Liang Lai, 2023). Family is the basic environment in which students live and plays a different role in helping them establish a correct view of life and death. Parents should give students a good sense of life induction, at the same time to create a good life and death education atmosphere, timely find the children's adverse psychological problems. As the main front of education, colleges and universities should not only teach knowledge and skills. Based on the current phenomenon that some college students disregard life and play games with life, they should carry out targeted thematic education activities, actively promote the curricular development of life and death education on campus and the lecture-style education of social science popularization, and thoroughly implement the "people-oriented" campus management concept. Life and death education should be popularized through campus radio, publicity bars, banners, and other ways to improve students' sense of life meaning. The realization of life-and-death education needs the support of the social system. Social media is one of the best carriers of life-and-death education for college students. The media network should vigorously publicize the purpose and significance of life-and-death education, set up columns to
introduce foreign advanced experiences, pass on the correct values of life to students, and form the correct guidance of public opinion. Relevant development, planning, advocacy, and public interest groups and government departments should promote death education, provide more social support, and encourage neighborhood harmony (Chen H, 2024). In addition, we should support and promote the establishment of social and civil organizations, and publicize the necessity and value of life and death education through multiple channels and ways, so that more people can understand and accept life and death education.

3.4 Tap local resources

On the one hand, the establishment of a scientific life-and-death education system should draw on the mature experience of foreign countries, on the other hand, it should respect the diversity of cultures, start from China, combine Chinese cultural characteristics, social hot spots, and local customs and cultures, carry out practical activities according to local conditions, set up life-and-death education methods that meet the cognitive characteristics of Chinese students and mainland people, and vigorously develop local resources. First, in terms of off-campus resources, we should make full use of the concepts, statements, and case models related to life and death issues in traditional culture to sort out and explore the unique wisdom of life and death of Chinese people. For example, Professor Zheng Xiaojiang's "Chinese Wisdom of Life and Death", "Learning Life and Death", "Interpretation of Life and Death" and other works are solidly combed to enrich the content of life and death education for college students; At the same time, local urban resources should be made full use of to allow people to participate in activities related to death, such as visiting funeral homes, nursing homes or intensive care units in hospitals and other places that can touch the end of life, so that college students can personally feel the process of life development. Second, in terms of campus resources, in addition to relevant works in university libraries, cultural festivals can be organized. Cultural forums and other activities allow students from different ethnic groups and religious beliefs to exchange death culture and funeral customs in their hometowns. Secondly, death-related cases, films, and video materials can also be found to discuss and analyze with students in class.

4. Conclusion

As an important part of life education, life and death education is an indispensable lesson in students’ lives. Due to the influence of various subjective and objective factors, life and death education of college students in China is difficult to achieve popularization and development in a short period of time. With the construction of a high-quality education system and the development of lifelong education, life-and-death education with Chinese characteristics will inevitably be put on the agenda.

References


