

# AN EXPLORATION OF THE PRACTICE OF MENTAL EDUCATION FOR HIGHER VOCATIONAL STUDENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** In recent years, our school has delved deep into studying a series of important statement on education reform made by General Secretary Xi Jinping. We have consistently adhered to the educational philosophy of "health first," implemented the educational policy that combines mental health education with life education, and addressed the frequent occurrence of the "four lacks" phenomenon among students in higher vocational colleges: lack of motivation in learning, lack of interest in the real world, lack of social skills, and lack of a sense of life value. Based on a precise understanding of the current social development trend and the dynamics of student thinking, we creatively integrate life education into mental health education. By introducing life education into the scope of mental health education, we promote life education in classrooms, dormitories, and hearts through the implementation of mental health education courses. We have established a "Four Navigation Integrated" system for mental health education, where teachers guide, courses lead, monitoring navigates, and hotlines escort, effectively establishing a long-term mechanism to eliminate the "four lacks" phenomenon. We continuously guide students to develop positive psychological qualities, to cherish life, and to love life, laying a solid foundation for cultivating generations of skilled craftsmen who are valuable and capable of undertaking heavy responsibilities in the socialist modernization construction.

**Keywords:** Higher vocational college students; "Four Lacks" phenomenon; Perspective of life education; Psychological issues; Intervention measures

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Promoting the physical and mental health as well as the comprehensive development of students is a major issue of concern for the people, and society. Recently, the Ministry of Education and 17 other departments issued the "Special Action Plan for Comprehensive Strengthening and Improvement of Student Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)," stating that "with the rapid development of the economy and society, the changing environment for students' growth, combined with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, student mental health issues are becoming more prominent." As practitioners in higher vocational colleges and as guides of student thinking, in the process of daily activities focusing on students, caring for students, and serving students, we keenly perceive the widespread occurrence of the "four lacks" phenomenon among students (referring to lack of motivation in learning, lack of interest in the real world, lack of social skills, and lack of a sense of life value) and the urgent need for intervention. Therefore, our school adheres to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for New Era, carries out the fundamental task of moral education, takes students' psychological needs as the starting point of work, aims to achieve students' self-growth in psychology as the educational goal, actively constructs a "Four Navigation Integrated" system for mental health education, wholeheartedly nurtures students' positive psychological qualities such as loving life, cherishing life, self-esteem, self-confidence, rationality, peace, optimism, and upward thinking, and comprehensively enhances students' mental health literacy.

## 2 MEASURES FOR CONSTRUCTING LIFE EDUCATION

### 2.1 Teacher Guidance: Strengthening the Team of Psychological Educators

As mentors for students' growth and development in university life and trusted confidants for healthy living, college counselors are the individuals closest to students from enrollment to graduation, with the most frequent contact and deepest emotional connections. When students encounter academic pressure, relationship issues, interpersonal conflicts, job anxieties, and other problems during their academic journey, they often turn to counselors they trust for help. At such times, counselors need to possess professional psychological knowledge and scientific counseling skills to truly understand and address students' needs.

To strengthen the team of psychological talents and enhance the quality of talent cultivation, our school emphasizes both external recruitment and internal training. On one hand, focusing on recruitment involves actively building platforms for talent acquisition, innovating recruitment methods, and increasing the emphasis on recruiting professionals in psychology during the counselor recruitment process. This is done to attract high-quality and highly skilled psychological professionals who can inject "new blood" into our counselor team, thereby enhancing the overall level of psychological education. On the other hand, the emphasis on internal training involves continuously

revitalizing internal resources by organizing regular psychological skills training for counselors, effectively utilizing the leading role of teachers in education. Through these measures, the psychological literacy of teachers is effectively enhanced, the practical effectiveness of psychological education is significantly strengthened, and support is provided for students' mental health growth.

## **2.2 Curriculum Guidance: Innovating Life Course Teaching Models**

Advancing socialist modernization requires high-quality laborers and advanced skills and techniques, calling for high-quality higher vocational education. In recent years, the country has continuously increased policy supply, innovated institutional design, and committed to building a modern vocational education system with Chinese characteristics, nurturing a large number of high-quality skilled talents and craftsmen.

However, influenced by traditional notions such as "academics over vocational skills" and "emphasis on academics over skills," there is a prevalent cognitive bias among the general public that diminishes the value of vocational education. Many believe that higher vocational education is "lower-level education," a less prestigious choice. This deep-rooted social bias leads to increased psychological pressure among higher vocational students, with most of them entering with feelings of inferiority. Without proper guidance, students are prone to developing a range of issues including low motivation, weak self-control, lack of goals, and a sense of meaninglessness in life. This inadvertently stifles students' potential development and conflicts with the educational philosophy of universities. Overcoming this bias, guiding students to break free from the "four lacks," enhancing self-identity, improving self-efficacy, and finding the value and meaning of their own lives is an important topic in higher vocational mental health education. It should be noted that due to the current lack of life education, many students do not know how to handle emotions, resolve conflicts, let alone understand the importance of respecting life and contemplating its meaning.

In light of this, our school insists on putting students at the center, focusing on students' life struggles and psychological needs. We have incorporated life education into the curriculum system of student mental health education, leveraging the main channel of classroom teaching in psychology, establishing an organic integration and mutual penetration teaching mechanism between life education and mental health education. For instance, we conduct special education on "Life Education - a Mandatory Course in Life" within the context of mental health education classes, using storytelling, interactive scenarios, dialogues, and other teaching methods to gradually awaken students' awareness of life, enabling them to better accept life education and spiritual enlightenment, guiding students to face life and death, learn to understand life, and respect life. Furthermore, seizing the opportunity of the 5.25 Mental Health Month, we vigorously implement actions to immerse students in heart education, widely engaging in diverse and enriching heart education practical activities. We introduce psychologically engaging activities that students enjoy, aiming to subtly promote life education through the organic combination of classroom teaching and practical activities in psychology. This aims to guide students to learn how to survive actively, live healthily, and develop independently, ultimately realizing the maximum value of life.

## **2.3 Monitoring and Guidance: Establishing a Comprehensive Psychological Health Monitoring System**

With rapid socio-economic development and the deepening of higher education, the number of students in universities is increasing year by year, and the scale is expanding. Influenced by factors such as individuals, families, schools, and society, the "four lacks" phenomenon among higher vocational college students has become more severe. Relying solely on the efforts of the school's psychological center is no longer sufficient to address the current pressing student mental health issues. It is necessary to quickly change the approach to work, adhere to a problem-oriented and systematic concept, and establish a sound psychological health monitoring system.

Through long-term practical exploration, our school has shifted from individual efforts to comprehensive guardianship in promoting psychological monitoring work. This has led to the establishment of a psychological health monitoring system that involves "psychological screening - professional interviews - scientific documentation - follow-up tracking." We have created a four-tier psychological health monitoring network comprising the "School Psychological Center - Departmental Psychological Counselors - Class Psychological Committee - Dormitory Psychological Liaison Officer." This system conducts psychological health assessments, scientifically categorizes and evaluates the results, and provides one-on-one, face-to-face, heartfelt psychological interviews for students with abnormal psychological assessment results. This process allows for a more precise identification of students' psychological conditions, the establishment of comprehensive and scientific student psychological files, ensuring a personalized file for each student. Subsequently, based on the list of students with abnormal psychological conditions and their psychological files, efforts are made to track key students effectively. Class teachers and counselors focus on monitoring emotional and behavioral changes in students with abnormal psychological conditions through regular dormitory visits, communication via WeChat, phone calls, etc. They provide dynamic reports on students' mental states every two weeks. Psychological counselors from departments and the school's psychological center assess students' psychological conditions regularly and intervene with targeted measures as needed. Additionally, efforts are made to train dormitory psychological liaison officers and class psychological committee members to become monitors and reporters of student psychological issues. Class psychological committee members actively engage with classmates, visit dormitories, and gradually establish a robust class psychological health network monitoring system for real-time monitoring and timely detection. Dormitory psychological liaison officers aim to understand, accept, listen to, accompany, and provide peer support for students

with abnormal psychological conditions. They closely monitor the movements of students with abnormal conditions in daily interactions, promptly report any anomalies for immediate teacher intervention.

## **2.4 Hotline Escort: Establishing a Smooth Channel for Psychological Crisis Intervention**

When students exhibit the "four lacks" phenomenon for a prolonged period, they are prone to experiencing psychological crises. The onset of these crises is not determined by the magnitude of the events themselves but rather by individuals' understanding and interpretation of the events. In other words, when students feel powerless and unable to cope subjectively in the face of setbacks, they may experience a psychological crisis. Failure to provide timely guidance can pose a hidden risk to the safety and stability of the school.

To further strengthen the campus psychological safety net and ensure students' psychological and physical well-being, our school prioritizes institutional measures and has introduced a manual for psychological health education. Additionally, to meet students' psychological support needs, we have established multiple channels to facilitate psychological assistance. We not only provide guides for psychological adjustment during key periods such as the beginning of the academic year and exam seasons but also offer psychological health tips, informative articles, and distribute hotline prompts to student dormitories. The aim is to raise students' awareness of seeking help and guide them to proactively seek assistance when facing psychological crises. Furthermore, our school regularly arranges for visits by psychologists to conduct interviews on campus, offering specialized psychological assessments for students requiring focused attention. We have also established deep collaborative relationships with specialized psychiatric hospitals to facilitate a seamless psychological referral "green channel." This ensures a rapid and high-quality response in terms of referral, treatment, rehabilitation, and follow-up for students experiencing mental health issues. The goal is to provide timely assistance, minimize the occurrence of student psychological crises to the greatest extent possible, safeguard students' safety and well-being, and ensure the stability and security of the campus.

## **3 SHORTCOMINGS AND PROSPECTS**

Currently, our school has made initial progress in eliminating the "four lacks" phenomenon among students through active exploration, continuous innovation, and the deep advancement of the integrated psychological health education system.

Despite making a series of new explorations and attempts to eliminate the "four lacks" phenomenon among students, our school still faces the following shortcomings. Firstly, there is a lack of clear and specific normative documents for the assessment standards of psychological health education work, leading to insufficient guidance and development opportunities for the psychological education team. Secondly, although our school has established a relatively sophisticated mechanism for cooperation, it has not fully engaged all staff, coordinated efforts vertically and horizontally, or collectively promoted the collaborative force of campus work. Lastly, while the psychological education practice activities conducted by our school are innovative and engaging, their impact on students is mostly temporary and phase-specific, failing to have a profound and lasting influence on students.

In the future, our school will continue to follow the guidance of the "Special Action Plan for Comprehensive Strengthening and Improvement of Student Psychological Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)." We will further enhance the standardization and scientific level of psychological health education, explore and research prospective and universal issues in psychological health education for college students, coordinate efforts from multiple parties, and make sustained advancements in the psychological health education of college students in the new era. The goal is to comprehensively promote high-quality development in college student psychological health education, continuously enhance college student psychological literacy, and provide ongoing support for the improvement of college student mental well-being.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

## **REFERENCES**

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