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Existential and Semantic Values of the Content of Pedagogical Discourse in High School

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Abstract

Introduction. The relevance of the research is conditioned by the dependence of formation of specialised professional interest of future teachers on existential approaches in the educational space. The article considers approaches in the educational process of higher education institutions that reveal and develop the existential being of students. The aim of the article is to study the state of modern educational space from the position of existential-social pedagogy, since the development of existential foundations of future specialist is the primary task for the formation of a person who can live his life, making the most of his potentials and realising himself in socially important activities.

Materials and methods. The fundamental method in the research is observation and sociological survey. In order to consider the problem of forming a person free in their decisions, making existential choice independently, realising its meaning and themselves in accordance with this choice, the authors define the directions of implementation of existential pedagogy in the activity of a higher educational institution and show the results of the conducted interviewing to determine the degree of manifestation of existential abilities in students of pedagogical direction 44.03.05 Pedagogical Education (with two training profiles). The received data allowed to estimate the level of existential content of future teachers and to make natural conclusions on the basis of the analysis of the received answers.

Results. The conclusion is made about the degree of influence of existentialism philosophy on the formation of beliefs and existential view of students within the framework of educational activity, namely, when performing project works, writing term papers and graduate qualification works. In its turn, the analysis of the content of existential and semantic values contributes to the determination of students' self-transcendence in the learning process, as the choice of the topic of project, educational and research works shows the ability of the future specialist to expand their own boundaries in different directions. The human being is inherent in the idea of putting forward their own positions and goals, as well as their achievement taking into account the assumption of their consequences. Recognising these assumptions of existentialism was the main purpose of the study.

Discussion and conclusion. In the course of the research, a survey was compiled to identify students' existential aspirations in the choice of life orientations based on the statements of famous teachers, writers and philosophers. As a result of analysing the received answers, we formed a general picture of the current state of existential-personal foundations of the personality.

Keywords: existential philosophy, existential pedagogy, existential-semantic values, pedagogical discourse

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Экзистенциально-смысловые ценности содержания педагогического дискурса в вузе**В.В. Колмакова** , **Я.В. Колмаков** 

Донской государственный технический университет, г. Ростов-на-Дону, Российская Федерация

vvklm07@mail.ru**Аннотация**

Введение. Актуальность исследования обусловлена зависимостью формирования осознанного профессионального интереса будущих педагогов от экзистенциальных подходов в образовательном пространстве. Рассматриваются подходы в образовательном процессе вуза, раскрывающие и развивающие экзистенциальное начало обучающихся. Целью статьи является изучение состояния современного образовательного пространства с позиции экзистенциальной педагогики, поскольку развитие экзистенциальных основ будущего специалиста является первоочередной задачей для формирования человека, умеющего прожить свою жизнь, максимально используя свои потенциалы и реализуя себя в социально значимой деятельности.

Материалы и методы. Основополагающим методом в исследовании является метод наблюдения и социологического опроса. Для рассмотрения проблемы по формированию свободного в своих решениях человека, самостоятельно делающего экзистенциальный выбор, осознающего его смысл и реализующего себя в соответствии с этим выбором авторы определяют направления реализации положений экзистенциальной педагогики в деятельности высшего учебного заведения и показывают результаты проведенного интервьюирования по определению степени проявления экзистенциальных способностей у студентов педагогического направления 44.03.05 Педагогическое образование (с двумя профилями подготовки) Русский язык и литература. Полученные данные позволили оценить уровень экзистенциальной наполненности будущих педагогов и сделать закономерные выводы на основании анализа полученных ответов.

Результаты исследования. Делается вывод о степени влияния философии экзистенциализма на формирование убеждений и экзистенциального взгляда обучающихся в рамках образовательной деятельности, а именно при выполнении проектных работ, написании курсовых и выпускных квалификационных работ. В свою очередь анализ содержания экзистенциально-смысловых ценностей способствует определению самотрансценденции студентов в процессе обучения, поскольку в выборе темы проектных, учебных и научно-исследовательских работ проявляется способность будущего специалиста расширять собственные границы в разных направлениях. Человеку присущи идеи выдвижения собственных позиций и целей, а также их достижение с учетом взятия на себя вытекающих последствий. В распознавании этих предпосылок экзистенциализма и заключался основной замысел исследования.

Обсуждение и заключение. В ходе исследования был составлен опрос на выявление экзистенциальных задатков студентов в вопросах выбора жизненных ориентиров на основе высказываний известных педагогов, писателей и философов. В результате анализа полученных ответов была сформирована общая картина текущего состояния экзистенциально-личностных основ личности.

Ключевые слова: экзистенциальная философия, экзистенциальная педагогика, экзистенциально-смысловые ценности, педагогический дискурс

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Introduction. The relevance of the research is conditioned by the dependence of formation of specialised professional interest of future teachers on existential approaches in the educational space. This paper considers approaches in the educational process that reveal and develop the existential being of students.

Philosophical understanding of activity is inseparably connected with the educational process. The concept of 'existentialism' originated in the first half of the 20th century [1]. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard was the first to address the issues of searching for the meaning of life in an attempt to comprehend God and understand the essence of man, the importance of personal choice. The ideas of this scientist were reflected in the works of Nietzsche with his term 'superman', Heidegger with the idea of connection with truth, Sartre with the idea of man as a project of themselves. The connecting link of all these philosophical doctrines was the aspiration to one goal: to renew the lost connection between being and human consciousness [2].

A special place in the formation of existential pedagogy belongs to the Austrian psychotherapist Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, who based his thesis on finding the meaning of existence in all manifestations of existence,

including creativity and work. The theory of existential approach is reflected in pedagogy [3]. The ideas of existential approach in pedagogy were traced in the works of D. Dewey [4], M. Montessori [5] and other famous teachers of the past.

A.I. Herzen, whose works [6] are devoted to the ideals of civic education, can rightfully be called the founder of Russian existentialism and, in particular, pedagogical existentialism. In the works of Russian teachers P.F. Kapterev [7], V.A. Sukhomlinsky [8], I.P. Ivanov [9] and others, the subjective approach in teaching and education of students was realised. The development of existential pedagogy ideas was continued by O.S. Grebenyuk and T.B. Grebenyuk in 'Fundamentals of pedagogy of individuality' and their followers, emphasising the most important pedagogical goal, i. e. the development of individuality of students [10].

The purpose of this study is to identify the interrelationships between existential and semantic values and the content of pedagogical discourse in the educational space of a higher educational institution, first of all, when studying a block of social and humanitarian disciplines.

Object of the study: existential and semantic values of human existence. Subject of the study: existential component of the content of the educational discourse of disciplines of social and humanitarian orientation. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the fact that the introduction of existential-meaningful ideas in the educational and research discourse of higher education institution expands the possibilities of self-transcendence of students and the life potential of future specialist.

Materials and methods. The leading scientific methods are the method of observation, the method of sociological survey along with questionnaires. The authors collected and analysed data on the study and manifestation of existential ideas in the educational process. The listed research methods allowed to reveal existential and semantic values of the respondents in relation to self-realisation and making important positions and decisions in life. The respondents of the sociological survey were 104 people of 18–21 and 22–27 age groups.

Stages of the study

1. Analysis and systematisation of research works and methods of implementation of existential beginning applied in the educational process.
2. Questions developed for the sociological survey and survey conducted.
3. Processing and analysis of the obtained data of the conducted sociological survey.
4. Determining the role and place of existential and semantic values in the pedagogical discourse of the educational space in higher education.

Results. Starting from the first year with the active participation of university teachers, students determine their professional inclinations and interests in the process of studying different disciplines:

- 1) the student 'declares' his/her interest by writing articles, reports and research papers;
- 2) the student implicitly expresses his/her interest and the teacher 'helps' him/her to realise it;
- 3) the student does not show interest and has difficulties in further education.

The research reviews the realisation of existential approach in pedagogy on the basis of the curriculum of direction 44.03.05 Pedagogical education (with two profiles of preparation) Russian language and literature.

Let us turn to the learning process as a consistent way of student's development as a specialist. Existential approach can be manifested in the study of disciplines of different levels: general education disciplines (the ones that are included in the compulsory part) and disciplines of choice, as well as in the writing of term papers and work papers.

One of the disciplines that form the development and improvement of leadership skills, the prospect to master more deeply both the methods of professional activity and the subject area, is the compulsory discipline 'Fundamentals of project activity' (Fig. 1).

One of the competences of the student, formed as a result of mastering this discipline, is the ability to develop the main elements of the project: content and technologies; time, quality and resource parameters of the project, its risks, intra-project information and communication. The topic of the future individual project a student of any direction chooses independently, realising his/her own existences. Subsequently, these skills become extremely important for a successful career in any field. The educational process predetermines, among other things, the gradual personal and professional self-realisation of the student during the study of a number of disciplines. Project activity as the first stage of personal realisation helps the student not only to learn to function in a team and get the first experience in search and research work, but also to start forming professional orientation. In the process of studying the discipline 'Basics of project activity', the methods of existential pedagogy are implemented as orientation to the learner's personality, dialogue method, experience-search method, etc., the use of which contributes to the development of the learner's creative thinking through individual (independent) search. In the process of working on the project, the student begins to develop a professional interest, which is further realised through the existential approach in the block of disciplines of choice.

B1.O	Compulsory part	УК-1.1; УК-1.2; УК-2.1; УК-2.2; УК-3.1; УК-3.2; УК-4.1; УК-4.2; УК-5.1; УК-5.2; УК-6.1; УК-7.1; УК-8.1; УК-8.2; УК-9.1; УК-10.1; ОПК-1.1; ОПК-1.2; ОПК-2.1; ОПК-2.3; ОПК-3.1; ОПК-3.2; ОПК-4.1; ОПК-4.2; ОПК-5.1; ОПК-5.2; ОПК-6.1; ОПК-7.2; ОПК-8.1; ОПК-8.2; ОПК-8.3; ОПК-9.1; ОПК-9.2; ОПК-9.3; ПК-1.2
B1.O.01	Philosophy	УК-1.1; УК-5.2
B1.O.02	History of Russia	УК-5.1
B1.O.03	Foreign language	УК-4.1
B1.O.03.01	Foreign language (English)	УК-4.1
B1.O.03.02	Foreign language (French)	УК-4.1
B1.O.03.03	Foreign language (German)	УК-4.1
B1.O.03.04	Foreign language (Russian as a foreign language)	УК-4.1
B1.O.04	Fundamentals of project activity	УК-2.1; УК-3.2
B1.O.05	General pedagogy	ОПК-3.1
B1.O.06	Development psychology	ОПК-6.1
B1.O.07	Fundamentals of inclusive culture and defectological knowledge	ОПК-8.1
B1.O.08	Business communications	УК-4.2
B1.O.09	Health and safety	УК-8.1
B1.O.10	Disciplines (modules) of choice 1 (ДБ.1)	УК-6.1; УК-9.1
B1.O.10.01	Social entrepreneurship	УК-6.1; УК-9.1
B1.O.10.02	Technology entrepreneurship	УК-6.1; УК-9.1

Fig. 1. Fragment of the curriculum with compulsory disciplines B1.O¹

B1.B.04	Disciplines (modules) of choice 4 (ДБ.4)
B1.B.04.01	Artistic world of A.P. Chekhov
B1.B.04.02	Poetic practice of Russian modernism
B1.B.04.03	Basics of philosophical knowledge in Russian literature of the 19th century
B1.B.04.04	Depiction of historical events in the works of M.A. Sholokhov

Fig. 2. Disciplines of choice in the curriculum

In the training of future teachers from the first year of study, people's preferences and professional interest in a particular speciality are identified. In the framework of the direction 44.03.05 in the 4th year students are given the opportunity to choose a discipline (Fig. 2). Among the subjects proposed in the curriculum: 'Artistic world of A.P. Chekhov', 'Poetic practice of Russian modernism', 'Basics of philosophical knowledge in Russian literature of the 19th century', 'Depiction

¹ Source: Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Table 1 compiled by the authors.

of historical events in the works of M.A. Sholokhov'. This list covers quite large layers of literature in general, so each student can choose a discipline (module) according to his/her interests.

The discipline 'Artistic World of A.P. Chekhov' allows to obtain and expand knowledge about the artistic originality of the writer's works, as well as to penetrate into his work as an integral artistic world existing in the context of the historical and cultural space of Russia and Europe of the late 19th–20th centuries. Many ethno-cultural realities of Chekhov's works make it possible to reveal the meanings that are embedded in their structure, but can be found only in the South Russian context. The study of the famous novelist and playwright's work is carried out by comparing the most important events in the famous writer's life with the deep meaning of his works of the time: For example, Chekhov's first collection of short stories 'Tales of Melpomene', which foreshadowed the writer's literary fame, the collection of 'Petty Stories', the condemnation of spiritual stagnation in the story 'Ionich', the motifs of struggle against humility in the story 'In Exile', the illustration of despotism in Russia in the story 'Ward No. 6', etc. This module reveals various aspects of the writer's work, including the mythopoetic context of his works, the problem of landscape and interior, the role of artistic detail in the system of a particular work and others. This course will be chosen by students who appreciate the capaciousness and poignancy of Chekhov's style.

Within the framework of the module 'Poetic practice of Russian modernism' the students develop fundamental epistemological and theoretical-literary ideas about the literary process in the 20th century, in-depth study of the poetic practice of Russian modernism, mastering the practice of analytical consideration of poetic works, as well as mastering the main theoretical and methodological issues and analytical consideration of poetic works by A.A. Akhmatova, V.V. Mayakovsky, D.I. Merezhkovsky, M.I. Tsvetaeva, A.A. Blok, K.D. Balmont, V.Y. Brusov, N.S. Gumilev, O.E. Mandelstam and others. The aim of the course is to reveal the semantic diversity of the poetry of Russian modernism as a non-classical poetic practice. During the study of this discipline, the student delves into the cause-and-effect relations of the domination of poetry in Russian literature of the early XX century, considers the peculiarities of the directions of Russian modernism, analyses the works of Silver Age poets and their stylistics. This course will be chosen by students who are close to the existential understanding of poetry and interested in the poetic practice of Russian poets of the modernist era.

The discipline 'Basics of philosophical knowledge in Russian literature of the 19th century' is devoted to the philosophical component of Russian literature in the context of literary works of the 19th century. A student dives deeper into the study of literature as an organic form of philosophical consciousness, evaluates the philosophical meaning of the text [11], analyses the philosophical component of the works of famous classical writers of the 19th century, considers the issues of losing and finding the meaning of life, faith and unbelief, human freedom, fear, longing and suffering. This course will be chosen by students who are interested in the mutual influence of Russian literature and philosophy, the productivity of their interrelationship, and the uniqueness of this experience in the cultural history of mankind.

The module 'Depiction of historical events in the works of M.A. Sholokhov' covers the most famous and significant works of the writer, which are devoted to historical events and the life of the Cossacks on the Don. This module discovers such works as 'The Quiet Don', 'The Raised Land', 'They Fought for the Motherland', the collection 'Don Stories', where the main idea of the author is realised in the study of human nature in the conditions of war and social upheaval, as well as in showing the collision of history with the personality, trying to preserve the age-old folk morals at crucial moments in the life of the country. This course will be chosen by students who are interested in M.A. Sholokhov's work, which is characterised by deep psychology, vivid images and accurate description of the historical context.

All these disciplines serve a common goal, i.e. to develop and implement individual educational routes, individual development programmes and individual-oriented educational programmes taking into account personal and age-specific characteristics of students. The implementation of existential approach in training is continued by writing term papers and graduation qualification works, where the personality and existential realisation of the future specialist is manifested.

Coursework involves the analysis and synthesis of theoretical and empirical material, designed to help consolidate and demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired in the process of mastering the curriculum, or to conduct independent research on a selected topic. Some of the topics are suggested by the instructor, but student-initiated topics are also taken into account, but in both cases the focus will be on the student's interest. Completed coursework is evidence of the future specialist's ability to work with literature, summarise and analyse factual material using theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired during the mastering of the higher education programme aimed at the integrated formation of universal and professional competencies. In the course of writing a term paper, the student not only develops his/her professional skills, but also realises their existence in the chosen subject.

The final stage of the personal manifestation of individualisation and the final stage of education is writing a final qualification paper, during which the student reveals his/her skills and capabilities to the fullest extent, presenting all their accumulated experience over several years of study and independent work. The analytical and practical part of the research manifests the existential beginning in the student's educational activity.

In order to determine the existential capabilities of students, a questionnaire survey of students in the age range from 18 to 27 years old was conducted with subsequent analysis of the answers presented in the table (Table 1). Not only full-time students but also part-time students were surveyed. On the basis of this division, it is possible to compare two age groups: students who have just entered their professional environment and professionals who already have some working life experience.

Table 1

Results of the questionnaire on determination of meaning-life and existential values among students
and existential values among students

Questions	Answer options	Age group 18–21		Age group 22–27	
		94		10	
		W	M	W	M
		86	8	9	1
Level of education	Secondary (complete)	73	8	1	0
	Secondary professional	13	0	8	1
Reason for choosing to pursue higher education in pedagogy	Desire to become a teacher	60	4	3	1
	Realisation of philological interests	11	2	3	0
	Influence of relatives and friends	5	1	1	0
	Decent salary	4	0	1	0
	Other	6	1	1	0
The main value in the educational process	The manifestation of personal freedom of action	6	0	2	0
	Creating your own meaning in life	12	2	0	0
	Taking charge of your own learning	13	0	1	0
	Developing a unique understanding of life	11	2	2	1
	Taking responsibility for one's own life and choices	37	3	4	0
	Being able to think critically about the world around you	7	1	0	0
Which teacher's statement is closer to you?	The whole life of a child is a movement towards the perfection of the self, towards the completion of the creation of the human being in the self (Maria Montessori)	9	0	0	0
	Don't expect your child to be like you or the way you want them to be. Help him to become not you, but themselves (Janusz Korczak)	50	5	5	0
	'...to open before everyone ... those spheres of development of their spirit, where they can reach the top, express themselves, declare themselves, draw strength from the source of human dignity, feel not deprived, but spiritually rich (V.A. Sukhomlinsky)	8	1	1	0
	The primary purpose of education is to teach you to think, not to teach you to think in any particular way (John Dewey)	15	1	1	1
	Reasonable recognition of willfulness is the highest and moral recognition of human dignity (A.I. Herzen)	4	1	2	0
Which philosopher's views do you share?	To exist is to be outside the crowd, constantly realising one's free choice, unbound by anyone and anything (S.O. Kierkegaard)	20	2	2	0
	Man is a project of himself (Jean-Paul Sartre)	36	2	3	0
	Man is a being who not only is, but knows that he is. Confident in his powers, he explores the world around him and changes it according to a certain plan (C.T. Jaspers)	17	1	2	1

End of table 1

Questions	Answer options	Age group 18–21		Age group 22–27	
		94		10	
		W	M	W	M
		86	8	9	1
	I can devote my life to work, science, enrichment, anything else, but I remain a human being only by choosing one possibility or the other. For this reason, not being able to avoid choice, a man decides on something and is bound to dissipate into an untrue existentiality (Martin Heidegger)	13	3	2	0
Which writer's opinion reflects your position on life?	The meaning of life is in the beauty and power of striving for goals, and it is necessary that every moment of being has its own high goal (M. Gorky)	29	2	2	1
	Man should have the desire to actively fight for the ideals of humanism and progress of mankind (M.A. Sholokhov)	3	0	3	0
	People are never satisfied with the present and, from experience, having little hope for the future, decorate the irretrievable past with all the colours of their imagination (A.S. Pushkin)	20	2	1	0
	Sometimes the best way to destroy a man is to let him choose his own fate (M.A. Bulgakov)	12	1	1	0
	The purpose of human life is to contribute in every possible way to the all-round development of all existing things (L.N. Tolstoy)	22	3	2	0
What discipline would you like to study?	Artistic World of A.P. Chekhov	41	0	3	0
	Poetic practice of Russian modernism	14	1	3	0
	Basics of philosophical knowledge in Russian literature of the 19th century	18	3	1	0
	Depiction of historical events in the works of M.A. Sholokhov	13	4	2	1
Do you think it is necessary to remain in people's memories and in what way?	To have a monument erected in my honour, to have a street named after me, to be awarded the Nobel Prize	2	0	0	0
	To become a famous person (scientist, teacher, writer, etc.)	51	6	3	0
	To become the founder of a new theory	6	0	1	0
	I do not consider it necessary	24	1	4	1
	Other	3	1	1	0

The ability to take responsibility for oneself is one of the main manifestations of existentialism, which is confirmed by the results of the survey. More than 40 % of respondents noted the ability to take responsibility for one's own life and choices as the main value in the educational process.

On the basis of questions that represent a particular life position of famous philosophers, writers and teachers, it is possible to identify learners who are more or less existentially developed. Many people agree with the opinion of Jean-Paul Sartre: 'Man is a project of himself'. Maxim Gorky's position is also close to many: 'The meaning of life is in the beauty and power of striving for goals, and it is necessary that every moment of being has its own high goal'. Janusz Korczak's pedagogical ideas were also supported by the respondents. When asked about the choice of the desired discipline, the majority would prefer to study 'Artistic World of A.P. Chekhov'. Finally, over 50 % of all respondents wished to become a famous person, giving individual answers: 'I just want to be remembered by my friends and relatives as responsive and kind, smiling and cheerful. A person who does not care about anything', 'All of us will remain in people's memory in one way or another. The only question is from which side and which people. It is impossible to remain in the memory of ALL, these very 'all' will not only forget in time, but also, until they forget, will add to your biography untrue and sometimes unflattering facts, which, in particular, may be slander, you can judge this by looking at the biographies of historical figures known to us, especially if you read unverified sources like some 'Yandex Zen', etc., and then you will be able to find out what you are doing.

Discussion and conclusion. The existential-psychological approach to axiological problems of education is promising. Existentialism, as an initial philosophical and later psychological trend, actualises the ideas of a person existing, thus, searching for meaning, making a choice, self-determining in his/her attitude to reality, possessing an active subjective essence. The life-affirming ideas of positive existentialism as a continuation of humanistic traditions in philosophy and psychology become the key pillars in substantiating the value and meaning-generating guidelines of individual's educational activity and the process of self-fulfilment of the individual. The significance of existentialism in pedagogy is in expanding the 'horizon of understanding' by a person of the meanings and significance of his/her education, leading the individual to discover new ways of being, directing him/her to make a choice in favour of true human values [12].

Existential values of education are universal characteristics, fundamental data of educational beingness, the actualisation of which determines the meaningfulness of human education, its self-fulfilment. From the point of view of subjective choice, existential values of education characterise the meaningfulness of a person's being, a special type of information that expresses the inner position, inclusion in education, awareness of its significance and meaning.

The values of education of an individual person become a factor that allows us to study not only the sphere of individual educational life, but also the value content of education for the generation as a whole. The main existential challenges of social life, influencing the problems and trends of development of education as a system, process and values define modern education, philosophy of modern educator, philosophy of teaching and learning. The identification and substantiation of existential challenges of life turns the philosophical anthropology of education in the direction of solving the most important problem, i.e. the search for the meaning of education, the vision of prospects and expression in the process of cognition of oneself and the world [13].

The search for the meaning of education is always a personal process. Comprehension of education in one's life, its meaning and tasks, is the acquisition of personal meanings: involvement in the process of educational activity, philosophy, inner existential involvement in cognition, expansion of knowledge boundaries, recognition of education as an opportunity for life self-fulfilment.

Deep reflexive position adequate to human goal-setting, overcoming the limitations of life, comprehension of what else can be done, what resources are not used - the existential potential of a person realised in education. It is in adulthood, being personally mature and responsible, that a person is able to experience the process of his/her education as an act of meaning creation in his/her own life [14].

Thus, the existential aspect of education consists in analysing the phenomenon from the position of the subject's choice of values, the value content of creating a future 'image'. By understanding and choosing values, finding meaning, becoming free, creative, different, open, reaching a certain completeness in the creation of his 'image', a person realises himself in his education. They understand what is necessary for learning now, what opportunities are open in prospective education, how necessary it is to choose these opportunities, for what to continue their education, whether they have realised what he aspired to. These internal resources of search, choice, understanding, acceptance, comprehension of positive values determine the existential potential of their actualisation in education.

Education cannot fulfil only an economic or employment function; education fills a person's life with the values of his state, society, culture and the world. Education is life itself, the expansion of human opportunities for a full, active and happy life.

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