

## VIETNAM MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER' PERCEPTION OF HAPPINESS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2018 GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> 13/8/2023</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> 30/10/2023</p> <p><b>Published:</b> 30/10/2023</p>	<p>Vietnam is in the process of reforming education to achieve the goal of maximizing learners' abilities. The 2018 General Education Program is an important change that greatly affects related subjects, in which teachers are the most affected. This article is the results of the survey conducted based on the scale "The feeling of happiness at work" with 18 items to measure the happiness of employees. The investigation scope is in 2 provinces respectively representing the North and the South regions of Vietnam, with the quantity of 356 secondary school teachers. The aim of this research is to clarify the current status of teachers' perception of happiness during the implementation period of the 2018 General Education Program; hence, the research duration is calculated from the initial phase of implementing this program. The investigation results show that all 4 factors (Negative feelings about work; positive feelings about work, job satisfaction, positive feelings about self-worth at work) received relatively high ratings from teachers. Nevertheless, regarding the evaluations of some of the items, there are still problems that urge solutions to improve.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Middle school teachers</p> <p>Reality of happiness</p> <p>2018 General Education Program</p> <p>Vietnamese</p> <p>Happy</p>	

## CẢM NHẬN HẠNH PHÚC CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TRUNG HỌC CƠ SỞ TRONG GIAI ĐOẠN THỰC THI CHƯƠNG TRÌNH GIÁO DỤC PHỔ THÔNG 2018

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
<p><b>Ngày nhận bài:</b> 13/8/2023</p> <p><b>Ngày hoàn thiện:</b> 30/10/2023</p> <p><b>Ngày đăng:</b> 30/10/2023</p>	<p>Việt Nam đang trong quá trình đổi mới giáo dục để tiến tới mục tiêu phát huy tối đa năng lực người học. Chương trình Giáo dục phổ thông 2018 là bước thay đổi quan trọng làm ảnh hưởng rất nhiều tới những đối tượng liên quan, trong đó giáo viên là đối tượng chịu ảnh hưởng nhiều nhất. Bài viết này là kết quả khảo sát dựa trên thang đo "Cảm giác hạnh phúc trong công việc" với 18 mục để đo lường hạnh phúc của nhân viên đối với công việc họ đang thực hiện. Phạm vi điều tra lần lượt là 2 tỉnh đại diện cho miền Bắc và miền Nam của Việt Nam, với số lượng 356 giáo viên THCS. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là làm rõ cảm nhận về hạnh phúc của giáo viên trong thời gian thực hiện Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông 2018. Kết quả điều tra cho thấy trên cả 4 yếu tố (Cảm nhận tiêu cực về công việc; cảm nhận tích cực về công việc, hài lòng với công việc, cảm nhận tích cực về giá trị bản thân trong công việc) đều nhận được đánh giá khá cao từ giáo viên. Tuy nhiên, qua đánh giá một số mặt vẫn còn những tồn tại nhất định và cần có những giải pháp hiệu quả để khắc phục.</p>
<p><b>TỪ KHÓA</b></p> <p>Giáo viên THCS</p> <p>Cảm nhận hạnh phúc</p> <p>Chương trình GDPT 2018</p> <p>Việt Nam</p> <p>Hạnh phúc</p>	

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## 1. Introduction

Carver and Scheier argue that professional happiness is the frequent experience of positive emotional states such as satisfaction, joy, excitement, enthusiasm, interest, and liking, and to a lesser extent negative emotions such as angry, upset, depressed, sad, anxious. Studies show that positive emotions make people feel better about life [1]. Cynthia also believes that career happiness includes positive feelings about the profession, satisfaction with the job being done and a positive feeling about one's own value in that job [2]. Do Ngoc Khanh believes that feeling professional happiness is not simply positive emotions, satisfaction with the job or a positive feeling about self-worth at work, but the author also believes that professional happiness karma includes negative emotions, that is, feelings of discomfort, frustration, and discomfort with the work being done [3]. Perceived professional happiness of teachers is an extremely important factor because it not only affects the positive psychological development of teachers but also indirectly affects students' psychology and their professional operational attitudes [4]. The characteristic of the teaching profession is to work with human subjects, their products are also the achievements of learners, therefore, enthusiasm for the profession is a highly appreciated factor for every teacher [5]. Teachers who feel happy will make effective contributions to teaching [6]. Accordingly, the influence on the perceived happiness of the teaching profession is determined by factors related to students, the working environment, peer relationships, or the teachers themselves [7].

Many studies suggest that teachers' perception of career happiness is determined by three factors (positive emotions, job satisfaction, and perceived self-worth at work) [8] and there are also studies show that teachers' perceived happiness at work not only stops at those three factors but also includes negative emotions at work [9]. Research on the status of teachers' perceived happiness during the implementation of the 2018 general education program, results show that middle school teachers in this period have not too high a perception, they are stressed by factors such as income, work-related relationships, job positions, teaching equipment, etc. [10]. Therefore, measures to increase the feeling of happiness for teachers are also interested in research [5]. The proposed measures are based on existing realities for teachers such as low income, and balancing time between housework and teaching and education... [4]. Thus, studying teachers' job happiness is an important job in the current period, making a great contribution to improving teaching and educational effectiveness [11].

## 2. Research model

### 2.1. Theoretical model

The theoretical model of "Perceived career happiness" is a model that measures workers' satisfaction with their jobs. The items in the scale have been thoroughly tested, validated and tested by the research team before publication. This model emphasizes employee satisfaction with their jobs and thereby shows employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the work they are performing.

This model has also been used by many studies to measure employee satisfaction. This model also argues that there are four factors that affect workers' feelings of happiness, including: Negative emotions toward work; Positive emotions towards work; Job satisfaction; Feeling positive about your own value at work.

### 2.2. Research objects

Researchers conducted a survey among 356 teachers of different secondary schools in Nam Dinh province and Binh Duong province. Sampling criteria include differences in school areas (urban school areas and rural, disadvantaged school areas); Criteria for school type (public, private or international school...). In addition, teachers participating in the survey ensure that they are teaching according to the 2018 general education curriculum.

Information about survey subjects after receiving survey results is shown specifically in the table 1.

**Table 1.** *Information of research objects*

Information of research subjects		Quantity	Proportion
Gender	Male	78	21.9
	Female	278	78.1
Education level	Upper secondary education	46	12.9
	Higher education	285	80.0
	Postgraduate education	25	7.1
Age	Under 30	58	16.3
	From 31 to 50	274	77.0
	Over 50	24	6.7
Seniority	Under 10 years	101	28.4
	From 11 to 20 years	162	45.5
	Over 20 years	93	26.1

### 2.3. Research methods

- Survey method through a scale: The study used the scale "Perception of happiness at work" by the research group Do Ngoc Khanh and colleagues conducted in 2019 and chaired by the Institute of Psychology to conduct measurements. Feeling the happiness of current Vietnamese high school teachers. The scale includes 4 factors: (1) *Negative emotions about work* (including 4 assessment factors: Work makes me feel disappointed; Work makes me feel frustrated; Work makes me feel frustrated, bored; Work makes me feel uncomfortable); (2) *Positive emotions at work* (including 4 assessment factors: Feeling interested in work; Feeling happy with work; Feeling satisfied with work; Feeling motivated with work job); (3) *Job satisfaction* (including 4 evaluation factors: Satisfaction with income from current job; Satisfaction in relationships with the majority of colleagues in the unit; Satisfaction with current job do; Satisfied with current position); (4) *Positive feelings about one's own value at work* (including 6 evaluation factors: Feeling that you are doing useful work at the unit; Feeling that the work is meaningful; Feeling productive Labor in the workplace is valuable; Feeling loved and respected by colleagues; Feeling able to demonstrate personal ability at work; Feeling appreciated by superiors for their contributions). There are 18 observed variables in total. The scale has an average Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.775 and on each item is 0.762.

- Interviews: The interview teams randomly pick some teachers following the 2018 General Education Program. The interviews involved the problems that they have to face when implementing the new teaching program. The data collected from the interview gave us a better comprehension of the survey results serving for the analysis, and assessment of job satisfaction of school teachers in Vietnam today.

- Mathematical statistics: We used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, version 22.0 to enter collected data for data processing and tabulation analyzing the average point, standard deviation in order to draw a conclusion for the research results.

**2.4. Execution duration:** The survey was conducted in March and April in 2023.

### 2.5. Rating scale

We use a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 to 5). Level 1 - Absolutely not/never. Level 2 - Rarely/rarely; Level 3- Occasionally; Level 4 - Regularly; Level 5 - Completely present/continuous.

The formula to calculate the average score between levels is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Distance value} = (\text{Maximum-Minimum}) / n = (5-1)/5 = 0.8$$

Thus, according to the calculation of the distance value between these hierarchies, the meaning of the levels is calculated as follows:

Level 1. From 1.00 to 1.80: Absolutely not/never

Level 2: From 1.81 to 2.60: Rarely/rarely

Level 3. From 2.61 to 3.40: Occasionally

Level 4. From 3.41 to 4.20: Regular

Level 5. From 4.21 to 5.00: Absolutely yes/continuous

The content with a high average score shows that it is highly appreciated in a positive way. However, the lower the score of 'The negative emotions at work' is, the higher teachers' satisfaction at work is.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Negative emotions about work

Negative emotions about work can be defined as being uncomfortable and frustrated with one's work or due to work. To be specific, they are pessimistic feelings of employees towards their job, or pessimistic feelings brought about by the work.

Table 2 shows us the average value of negative emotions toward workers' work. Through table 2, we can see that the average rating "Mean" gives a value that is not too high. Based on the conversion score, it can be seen that the negative emotions towards work of secondary school teachers are currently at the "Rarely/rarely" level, which also means that teachers are feeling more about other positive emotions.

**Table 2.** Average statistics on negative emotions about work of Vietnamese Middle school teachers

Negative emotions with work	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work makes me feel disappointed	356	1.00	5.00	2.1854	.94610
Work makes me feel irritated	356	1.00	5.00	2.2978	.81264
Work makes me feel bored	356	1.00	5.00	2.0787	.84886
Work makes me feel uncomfortable	356	1.00	5.00	2.0506	.83090
Valid N (listwise)	356				

According to the research of Ha & Nguyen [12]: negative emotions at work have a considerable effect on labor efficiency. "*Sometimes I feel a sense of self-disappointment because I don't see myself adapting to the new curriculum. It is a far cry from the old one, which makes me confused and it is hard to find a suitable teaching method*" (Teacher No.15).

Negative emotions that teachers are facing now can mostly be solved once society and leaders show their sympathy and lend a helping hand to the teachers. Minimizing negative emotions at work is one of the necessary duties to increase the perception of happiness among teachers.

#### 3.2. The reality of positive emotions at work

Positive emotions bring comfort, happiness, and pleasure to employees. Table 3 shows teachers' assessments of their own feelings about positive emotions in their work.

**Table 3.** Average statistics on positive emotions about the work of Vietnamese Middle school teachers

Positive emotions at work	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel excited when working	356	1.00	5.00	3.9522	.80174
I feel delighted when working	356	1.00	5.00	4.0197	.70584
I feel comfortable when working	356	1.00	5.00	3.7921	.81641
I feel motivated when working	356	1.00	5.00	3.8989	.75500
Valid N (listwise)	356				

Among the 4 items above, the item "I feel delighted when working" got the highest average score (4.01). The second highest item is "I feel excited when working", with an average score of

3.9522/5). The results of the interviews with some Vietnamese high school teachers also show that they “feel excited when working” because there is a change in teaching method. However, the percentage of Never, Rarely, Occasionally rising up to 17.6% (see table 3) demonstrates that many Vietnamese high school teachers are still not “feeling excited about work”. When interviewing some teachers, we realized that one of their requirements is “*more working autonomy*” (ID166), “*fewer documents and records to solve everyday*” (ID232, 236, 212, 213).

Studies on job satisfaction and job performance have found that job satisfaction is defined as an employee's positive or negative feelings about their job [13]. Positive feelings mean high job satisfaction. By contrast, negative feelings are synonymous with low job satisfaction. The survey results in table 3 show that: Vietnamese teachers in general are satisfied with their job (3.7921/5) and get motivated (3.8989/5). Overall, positive emotions at work are highly appreciated. However, the rating of level 1, 2, 3 still accounts for a large proportion. This concludes that bringing satisfaction, excitement, and happiness to the teaching profession still has certain limitations and inadequacies.

### 3.3. The current status of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is understood as the condition in which employees feel satisfied with the job in terms of income, effective colleague relationship, and position.

Similar to the above-mentioned emotions, the employee's job satisfaction includes 4 items: I am satisfied with my income from the work; I am satisfied with my relationship with most of my colleagues; I am satisfied with the job; I am satisfied with my position.

Among the factors in the evaluation of teachers' satisfaction with work, “*satisfied with the current income*” received the most conflicting information.

To see more clearly the average value of this rating, the SPSS results will show us the mean overall rating of teacher satisfaction shown in table 4.

**Table 4.** Table showing the average value of job satisfaction of Vietnamese Middle school teachers

Job satisfaction	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Satisfied with the income of current job	356	1.00	5.00	2.8904	1.27680
Satisfied with colleague relationships	356	1.00	5.00	4.2444	.77956
Satisfied with the current job	356	1.00	5.00	4.0449	.85131
Satisfied with the current position	356	1.00	5.00	4.0787	.94317
Valid N (listwise)	356				

The survey results in Table 4 show that only the income-related factor is significantly underestimated compared to others.

The teachers' income issues are always the most “chronic” problem for the education industry. Many studies show that with the current salary and income level, many teachers cannot earn a living [14], [8]. Practice shows that, according to the regulations of the Vietnamese State, the income of teachers is calculated according to the formula: Salary/allowance = Coefficient\*Base salary + allowance. In which, the current base salary, as prescribed by law, is 1.800.000 Vietnam dong (equivalent to 74.2USD). Statistics from the research of Pham.Q.T [15] on a large-scale study with the participation of about 1801 teachers reports that: the “*very low*” standard of living of middle school teachers accounts for about 2.9%, the “*low*” level is about 46.1% and the “*high*” level only makes up of 0.2%. This can be said to be a very low level of income that does not satisfy current teachers. The results obtained from open-ended questions received different opinions on this issue: “*More attention should be paid to the material and spiritual life of teachers*” (ID31); “*A raise in salary for teachers*” (about more than 50% of teachers proposed).

The other three factors received not too low evaluation, all reaching above 4 points. Teachers find “*relationships with colleagues*” the most satisfied (4.2444/5). “*Satisfied with current job*” and “*satisfied with current position*” both received the same rating (4.0449 – 4.0787).

Although the job satisfaction factor is rated relatively high by teachers, there are still teachers who are not really satisfied. In any working environment, there will definitely be people who are not really satisfied with the job they undertake. This results from many factors but the most important one lies in the personal factor. Each employee needs to adapt to his or her working environment and strive for the ultimate development goal of the company. However, the state also needs to enact effective policies and measures to increase the perception of happiness for teachers, help them be motivated to work better, more effectively, and further improve job satisfaction.

### 3.4. The current status of positive feelings about self-worth at work

This dimension refers to the concept in which employees feel valued in their work. That means workers feel they are doing useful work, bringing efficiency and benefits to society, and are recognized and appreciated by society. Table 5 will show us teachers' assessments of how they feel about the work they are doing.

**Table 5.** The average value of teachers' positive feelings about self-worth at work

Factors to assess job satisfaction	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feeling your work is useful in the office	356	1.00	5.00	4.2528	.80008
Feeling the work is meaningful	356	1.00	5.00	4.2472	.79832
Feeling the result of the work is valuable	356	1.00	5.00	4.1994	.79583
Feeling loved and respected by the colleagues	356	1.00	5.00	4.2556	.73108
Feeling my abilities are effectively shown at work	356	1.00	5.00	4.1320	.79929
Feeling my leaders highly appreciate your contributions	356	1.00	5.00	3.9747	.87012
Valid N (listwise)	356				

Among the 6 sectors in the concept of "positive feelings about self-worth at work" of Vietnamese high school teachers, the content that are most appreciated by teachers is "feeling loved and respected by colleagues" and "feeling your work is useful in the office". These are also the two factors that receive the highest rating of all factors that evaluate teachers' feelings of happiness at work. The factor that is rated lower than the other 5 factors is "feeling that my leaders appreciate my contributions" (see Table 5). This result points out that current teachers do not really put their trust in the school principal.

### 3.5. The current status of the faith level in professional happiness in the future

There are two types of beliefs, positive beliefs, and negative beliefs. In this study, we conducted a survey of teachers' faith on the basis of positive beliefs.

Table 6 will show us the results of teachers' assessments of their beliefs about feeling happy about their future career.

**Table 6.** Vietnamese teachers' faith in professional happiness

Faith in professional happiness in the future	Level (%)		
	Disbelieve	Partly believe	Believe
Teachers expect that in the coming time, Vietnam Education will be enhanced, thus meeting the demand of society's renewal.	2.0	31.5	66.6
Teachers expect that in the coming time, students will have originality, and promote their full potential and talents.	1.7	34.6	63.8
Teachers expect that in the near future, they will work in a more modern environment.	2.8	29.2	68.0
Teachers expect that in the near future, they will have more time of relaxation	11.0	44.4	44.7
Teachers expect that in the near future, they will obtain job satisfaction (income, position, relationship...)	5.6	36.8	57.6
Teachers expect that in the near future, they will experience more positive feelings about self-worth in job	2.8	27.5	69.7

From the above data, it is obvious that the percentage of teachers who choose the “believe” level accounts for the highest proportion. The lowest is the “disbelieve” level. This outcome shows a positive sign for the innovation of the current 2018 General Education Program. Nevertheless, in the context of education where teachers play a main role in determining the prosperity of this profession, the above “disbelieve” statistics reveal an unwanted “risk”.

However, the authors also got other results from interviewing several teachers about faith in professional happiness. “*I don't have high hopes for it, at first it was properly implemented, but who knows how it will be then*” (ID21).

#### 4. Conclusion

Professional happiness, which provides leaders with more general views on the attitude and work motivation of employees, is an extremely crucial criterion. Education in Vietnam is in the period of a comprehensive reform of the educational program and teachers are the people who bring and promote inspiration, and create prosperity for education. Within the framework of the survey, the author has pointed out the happiness level of teachers and their feelings towards work in the current period. Thereby, the author draws some conclusions as follows: 1/Teachers are currently assessing their job satisfaction at a relatively high level; 2/Teachers give a relatively high rate for some criteria of happiness at work and numerous criteria were still underestimated; 3/Teachers do not fully have faith in their future professional happiness. Due to the above issues teachers are encountering, The Ministry of Education of Vietnam needs to come up with effective solutions with a view to enhancing teachers' professional happiness. This is also an issue that managers need to pay attention to in order to have further development directions for teachers in the roadmap for implementing the 2018 general education program.

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