

The Realistic Dilemma, Problem Tracking and Mitigating Strategies of Primary School Science Teachers' Professional Happiness

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Abstract

The Science teachers in primary schools are the key group in developing science education, and they play a vital role in realizing the dream of strengthening the country through education. Their professional happiness deserves special attention. Whether this group is happy not only affects their own working conditions and quality of life, but also affects the work vitality of other teachers. Improving the professional happiness of science teachers in primary schools has become an important topic in the construction of teachers' team in the new period. At present, the intensity of primary school science teachers' own work is high, their non-own work is increasing, their physical and mental health is difficult to guarantee, and their professional happiness is reduced. The main causes of the problems are poor individual psychological quality, poor school management style and improper social cognitive evaluation. In order to solve this problem, we have explored strategies to improve the professional happiness of science teachers in primary schools through re-shaping teachers' work, democratic management of schools and national policy guarantee.

Keywords

Science Teacher, The Happiness of the Profession, Mitigation Strategies

1. Research Questions and Background

With the development of the economy and social progress, happiness has become a topic of universal concern. Happiness, in this context, refers to the desired state where an individual experiences a sense of ideal psychological functioning and fulfillment [1]. This state of happiness plays a significant role in

shaping one's work performance and overall quality of life. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Construction and Reform of Teachers in the New Era, which pointed out that by 2035, "teachers should have a sense of happiness in their posts, a sense of achievement in their careers and a sense of honor in society, and teachers should become enviable occupations". Therefore, improving teachers' professional happiness has become an important topic in the construction of teachers' team in the new era. Science teachers in primary schools are the key group in developing science education, and play a vital role in realizing the dream of strengthening the country through education. Only when science teachers in primary schools have a high sense of professional happiness can they better carry out science education in primary schools. Their professional happiness deserves special attention. Whether this group is happy or not will not only affect their working conditions and quality of life, but also affect the working vitality of other teachers. The professional happiness of science teachers in primary schools refers to primary school science "teachers' reaction to their work and occupation, including cognitive happiness, subjective happiness, healthy happiness and social happiness" [2]. In order to improve the professional happiness of science teachers in primary schools, we need to base ourselves on the actual problems, analyze the causes of the problems and explore ways to solve them. In terms of research methods, in addition to literature research and action research, this paper also adopts investigation research methods. Sample schools are selected for sampling survey, and questionnaires are made by questionnaire design software, and then released through online communication tools. Finally, software data and statistical data are designed by using the questionnaire.

2. The Realistic Dilemma of Primary School Science Teachers' Professional Happiness

2.1. The Intensity of One's Own Work Is High, and the Sense of Professional Happiness Decreases

Science teachers in primary schools have heavy tasks, long working hours, great work pressure and decreased sense of professional happiness. More than 61.5% of primary school science teachers feel that their work intensity is too high, more than 55.3% of primary school science teachers feel that their physical and mental health is not good, and 73.6% of primary school science teachers think that their working hours are too long. Get up at 6 o'clock every day, start work at school, and then get off work after 6 o'clock in the evening, working for more than 10 hours every day. Article 36 of the Labor Law of People's Republic of China (PRC) clearly stipulates: "the state practices a working-hour system in which the daily working hours of laborers do not exceed 8 hours and the average weekly working hours do not exceed 40 hours." However, in practice, science teachers have to prepare lessons, attend classes and tutor students during the day, and

spend a lot of time preparing experimental equipment for students in groups at night, which is seriously beyond working hours. At present, the total weekly working hours of science teachers in primary schools in China have far exceeded the 40 hours stipulated in the Labor Law, and the average daily workload has reached more than 10 hours, including daytime working hours and overtime hours at night, as well as overtime hours on weekends or holidays [3]. Especially under the context of the “double reduction” education policy, in order to improve the quality of classroom teaching and after-school service, the workload of science teachers is greater, and the demand for reasonable work intensity and working time is further enhanced [4]. In addition, science teachers in primary schools have the characteristics of high pay and low return. 45.81% of science teachers think that pay and return are not equal, which directly leads to the decrease of their professional happiness [5].

2.2. Non-Job Increases and Professional Happiness Decreases

The increase of non-jobs in schools will reduce teachers’ professional happiness. From the actual work of science teachers in primary schools, there are too many non-professional routine jobs such as “filling out forms”, “statistics” and “publicizing schools”, and they have little time to study and prepare for teaching. These trivial things make the work time of science teachers fragmented and become the main source of their workload [6]. These non-professional positions increase the workload of science teachers and become “administrative peripheral pressure” [7]. Due to the unreasonable involvement of digital technology resources, the working hours of science teachers are becoming more and more fragmented, and a lot of time and energy are squeezed by non-educational teaching firms, such as managing parents’ WeChat groups and checking school notices. Teachers are unconsciously exposed to the real-time monitoring of technical networks, and their professional activities and even their daily lives have become more and more transparent [8]. The research shows that, compared with the international average, teachers in China spend more time on communication and cooperation, home-school communication, school management and daily administrative work, while the time spent on classroom teaching only accounts for 1/5 of the total working time [9]. Some schools do not attach importance to science education, and routine work occupies a lot of time, which makes science teachers spend less time in classroom teaching.

2.3. Physical and Mental Health Is Difficult to Be Guaranteed, and Occupational Happiness Is Reduced

China Teachers “Development Report 2020-2021”: Development Trend, Challenges and Promotion Measures of Primary School Teachers’ Professional Happiness, written by Professor Li Guang and Professor Liu Haimin of Northeast Normal University, shows that the health and happiness of primary school science teachers are relatively unbalanced. Research shows that they are facing a

health difficulties, mainly at the physical and psychological levels. In terms of physical health, 62.5% of science teachers often don't get enough sleep because of overtime, and 53.8% of science teachers feel unwell. On the level of mental health, 39.6% science teachers lack work fun; 41.6% of science teachers feel persistent fatigue and have anxiety or depression. Primary school science teachers' sense of professional security is very poor, which affects their physical and mental health, which is embodied in the aspects of salary guarantee, daily teaching management and school support. In addition, the lack of positive evaluation of social value of science teachers will also affect their enthusiasm and vitality [10].

3. The Problem of Occupational Happiness of Science Teachers in Primary Schools Can Be Traced Back to the Source

3.1. Poor Psychological Quality of Individuals Affects the Sense of Professional Happiness

Primary school science teachers' sense of professional happiness is not strong, and there are three individual factors: lack of positive psychological quality, lack of mature professional personality and lack of sincere education feelings. First of all, positive psychological quality is the psychological basis for the formation of professional happiness, which will affect the professional happiness of science teachers. Research shows that some science teachers in primary schools lack positive psychological quality. The specific manifestations are as follows: 29.3% of science teachers lack creativity; 29.7% science teachers lack positive qualities such as optimism and hope; 26.5% of teachers feel that "work is very boring". Secondly, mature professional personality is closely related to teachers' professional happiness, which will affect the teaching effect. A professional personality is the professional attitude and tendency of teachers to pursue professional development and growth. Science teachers in primary schools are professional teachers, who should have mature professional personality, but the reality is not optimistic. The research shows that most primary school science teachers lack career constancy, and 92.3% primary school science teachers lack reflective behavior in education and teaching. 29.5% of science teachers in primary schools lack enough patience and perseverance in student discipline. Finally, the lack of sincere education feelings will affect the professional happiness of science teachers. Here, educational sentiment refers to the spiritual character of primary school science teachers' persistence and love for their educational cause [11]. The research shows that 23.3% of science teachers show a lack of interest and love for their careers, 36.1% of science teachers have no enthusiasm and vitality for their careers, and 41.2% of science teachers want to leave their jobs a day earlier.

3.2. Poor School Management Affects the Sense of Professional Happiness

Unscientific school management, unreasonable teacher evaluation system, and

heavy non-teaching tasks will all affect teachers' professional happiness. School management is authoritative and mandatory, lacking democracy. Science teachers in primary schools often feel that their work is controlled and supervised by others. In particular, the regular assessment of teachers has brought some pressure to the science teachers in primary schools. In addition, they take on too many non-teaching jobs, which cannot bring them a sense of professional achievement and affect their professional happiness. In addition, the ineffective protection of independent rights and interests has triggered their "sense of professional crisis", which can be attributed to the following three specific reasons: First, the protection of teachers' independent rights and interests has not been fully implemented in the implementation of national policies, and nearly 59% of science teachers report that relevant national policies have not been fully implemented locally; Second, the school neglected the protection of teachers' rights and interests in the formulation and implementation of the management system. 40.9% science teachers said that the school management system did not respect teachers' rights and interests enough in the implementation process; thirdly, teachers' right to education and teaching is impaired. More than 50% science teachers said that corporal punishment or corporal punishment in disguised form is explicitly prohibited by the policy, but this kind of education method that advocates respect and appreciation will lead to teachers' criticism of the lack of educational rights.

3.3. Improper Social Cognitive Evaluation Will Affect the Sense of Professional Happiness

The society's respect for science teachers in primary schools is relatively weak, which reduces their professional happiness to some extent. Science education in primary schools is very important and bears the hope of the country in the future. However, due to the one-sided concern of society, many people think that science is not important, and science is a minor course. There is a huge gap between the importance of science education in primary schools and the sense of social identity with science teachers in primary schools, which easily makes science teachers in primary schools doubt the value of their profession and reduce their sense of professional identity, thus makes them lose their vitality and yearning for their profession. In the United States, Britain, Finland and other countries, the whole society attaches great importance to science teaching in primary schools, and the status of science teachers is also relatively high. The lack of social respect has reduced the professional happiness of science teachers. The study shows that the social status of science teachers is still at a low level. 59.1% of science teachers think that "the atmosphere of respecting teachers and attaching importance to teaching in the current society is not enough", and 56.1% of science teachers say that "the media or public opinion on the profession of science teachers has reduced my professional happiness". There are also science teachers who say that in fact, most teachers in their jobs are conscientious. Although there may be some exceptions, the online media have weakened

the publicity of their positive image, which has led to insufficient respect for science teachers in society, reduced their enthusiasm for work, changed their understanding of science teachers' profession, and shaken the professional competence and self-confidence of some science teachers.

4. Measures to Alleviate the Occupational Well-Being of Primary School Science Teachers

4.1. The Psychological Level of Teachers to Reshape the Work

Science teachers in primary schools are biased towards their professional identity. They can strengthen their ideals and beliefs, establish their educational feelings and gain a sense of professional happiness through "job remodeling". Work handicrafts require individuals to make corresponding changes in their cognition or operation from their own perspective [12], reconstruct their work, and thus gain a sense of meaning [13]. Tims and Bakker *et al.* [14] combined with previous studies and Bakker and Demerouti *et al.*'s "Job Requirements-Resource Model" [15], and put forward that job remodeling is to achieve the balance between job resources and job requirements by changing one's own abilities and needs. In this process, science teachers will pay more attention to their own behavior changes, which can enhance their professional identity. The professional identity of science teachers is a combination of teachers' positive cognition, experience and behavior tendency towards their profession and internalized professional role, and it is a positive attitude related to their profession [16]. The individual is the subject of happiness [17], and science teachers need to have both subjective consciousness of building happiness and positive psychological capital in their work to improve personal happiness [18].

4.2. School Management, the Implementation of Democratic Management

Implementing democratic management and creating a harmonious atmosphere can enhance teachers' sense of professional happiness. Managers should play an exemplary role, exercise democratic management of teachers, create a harmonious interpersonal relationship and form a good psychological environment in schools; improve the teacher evaluation system, adopt a democratic and scientific way and strengthen the humanistic care of schools. We need to do three things: pay attention to physical and mental health, and lay the foundation of happiness; Respond to growing needs and stimulate personal vitality; Strengthen service awareness and implement people-oriented management. Democratic management needs good evaluation, and the performance evaluation of teachers in the United States gives us good inspiration. This evaluation method advocates the evaluation of teachers' real performance in teaching practice in real classroom situations [19]. As far as the actual situation is concerned, no matter what kind of evaluation of science teachers mentioned above, the evaluation results are mostly limited to the evaluation and assessment of science teachers, rather

than promoting their professional practice [20] and development. An investigation into the actual use of the evaluation results of science teachers shows that 86.9% of the results are mainly used for evaluating the excellent and evaluating the first, 61.2% for performance-based salary distribution and only 23.2% for teacher training and development [21].

4.3. The Level of National Policy Is to Protect the Rights of Teachers

Strengthening the guidance of teachers' policies is the strategic basis to improve the professional happiness of primary school science teachers. First, listen to the demands of teachers and enrich the policy connotation; the second, implement educational legislation and carry forward the scientific spirit; the third is to standardize the policy operation and improve the implementation effect. It is necessary to enhance the professional identity of science teachers in primary schools and improve their social status. First of all, the relevant education departments can clearly stipulate the treatment and welfare enjoyed by science teachers in the form of laws and regulations according to their professional nature and work characteristics and with reference to the National Civil Service Law. Secondly, publicize the professional value of science teachers, affirm the significance of science teachers' work and clarify their social status. Establish a rational and fair evaluation mechanism for science teachers; provide them with all kinds of opportunities for further study, meet their self-improvement development needs and promote the self-efficacy of science teachers; it is also necessary to enhance the understanding and support of society and stimulate the educational feelings of science teachers in primary schools. Actively guide public opinion and inspire people to respect the profession of science teachers in primary schools. Legislation is the basis of good law and good governance [22], and the basis and premise of justice in law enforcement [23].

5. Research Conclusion

To sum up, this paper focuses on the problem of the decline of primary school science teachers' professional happiness, analyzes the causes of the problems, and explores ways to solve the problems, hoping to make a useful attempt to improve primary school science teachers' professional happiness. Of course, everything has certain flaws, but these flaws are also the driving force for our continuous progress. Although the overall occupational happiness of science teachers in primary and secondary schools is acceptable, there are still many internal problems. We can't be covered by external appearances, otherwise there may be wrong understanding and judgment. Stimulating the professional happiness of primary school science teachers can not only stimulate the endogenous motivation of individual careers, but also play a positive leading role for all teachers. In the discussion part, this study makes an in-depth analysis of the survey results and draws some new findings: the higher the professional happi-

ness of science teachers in primary schools, the greater the motivation to engage in science education; on the contrary, the lower the sense of occupational happiness, the lower the willingness to engage in science education. In the part of problem-solving strategies, starting from teachers themselves, starting from the perspective of school administrators and starting from the perspective of legislation, it is conducive to the improvement of problems. But in a short time, these methods and strategies have limited effect on school management and national policies, and can only be changed by primary school science teachers themselves. In the process of engaging in science education in primary schools, they found meaning and value. Of course it's not easy, but it's better to change than to stand still. The purpose of our research is to improve the professional well-being primary school science teachers, but the survey results show that their professional well-being is not strong. Through reason analysis, we seek strategies to solve the problems aiming at improving the professional well-being of primary school science teachers. From the problem to reason, from reason to the strategy, is the general idea of this study. The core significance of this study lies in improving the professional happiness of primary school science teachers, and the significance of the research results lies in exploring the practical path to improve the professional happiness of primary school science teachers by raising questions, analyzing reasons and exploring reasons.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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