



## Research Article

# SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF THE HAPPY SCHOOL AND RECOMMENDATION IN VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper provides some of the 'world's happy school models and offers a set of recommendations that can be made in Vietnam. Through an analytical approach, paper synthesis, the paper draws upon several models along with the specific requirements of each happy school model. Based on the practical conditions of Vietnamese society and education, especially in the context of the implementation of the 2018 general education program, the 'authors' team proposes a few recommendations to realize the Happy School model in practice gradually. The study found many models of happy schools around the world with specific guidelines and standards that can be developed in our country to raise the level of happiness perceived by students, teachers, and other education forces in the school.*

**Keywords:** happiness; happy school; model; standard

## 1. Introduction

Happiness is always what people want to have in life. Since ancient times, people have cared about and sought happiness. Aristotle once said, Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole goal as well as the end of human existence (Crisp, 2000). Recently, happiness is not only associated with individuals but also extends to businesses, schools, countries., especially in schools. The term 'happy school' has gradually become familiar and increasingly important to the education sector internationally. In addition to equipping students with knowledge and skills, how to create a happy school is a major focus of the education sector. Studies have also shown that promoting 'people's happiness and health not only improves life satisfaction but also enhances educational outcomes. Schools that prioritize the well-being of their students are more likely to do well in school, have better academic performance, and often achieve greater success later in life (Layard, 2015).

According to UNESCO (2016), a happy school has positive human relationships,

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appropriate teaching and learning methods, and a safe and friendly learning environment. In the most general sense, a happy school is an environment where teaching is focused not only on what students need and lack but also on supporting them to maximize their potential, especially enthusiasm, learning, and physical and mental health. In addition, the term 'happy school' can be understood as a place where there is no school violence, no violations of teacher ethics, and no acts that offend the honour, dignity, or friendship of the teachers and students. It can be seen that a happy school is an ideal educational environment when teachers, students as well as parents feel happy in the process of teaching and learning; this is where the love between teachers, between teachers and students, and between students is cherished and nurtured daily. A happy school is an environment where both teachers and students have the opportunity to develop holistically, with beautiful behaviours and souls, promoting a friendly, progressive school future.

Building happy schools is one of the key activities of the Vietnamese education sector from the 2018 - 2019 academic year, to create and maintain schools where students, officials, teachers, and employees are loved, respected, safe, understood, and valued. More broadly, developing a friendly and civilized school environment and cooperation for sustainable development in the context of educational innovation in the country (Vietnam Education Union, 2019). Studies on 'students' feelings of happiness in Vietnam show positive feelings about their relationship with teachers, the implementation of rules, and extracurricular activities organized by the school (Tran & Ngo, 2018).

In September 2022, the Department of Teachers, Ministry of Education and Training organized a seminar, 'Change for a happy school' with the theme 'Choose Love - Choose Happiness,' that raised many issues, in which there is the promotion of building happy schools in Vietnam. However, to be able to deploy synchronously and comprehensively, it is necessary to have in-depth scientific studies on happy schools in the world, from which to draw appropriate points to apply in Vietnam. This article will contribute the initial theoretical basis for the happy school model internationally and recommendations for application in Vietnam.

## **2. Method**

The object of the research is to study some international happy school models.

The main method is textual research. Through documents internationally and domestically, the authors conduct analysis and synthesis to draw out several happy school models. On that basis, some recommendations can be applied to building a happy school model in Vietnam.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. The 3P Happy School Framework of UNESCO**

UNESCO (2016) has launched a model called 'Happy School' around three letters P: People, Process, and Place with 22 criteria:



**Figure 1.** 3P Happy School framework of UNESCO

**People:** To have a happy school, it is necessary to focus on building human values and positive behaviour standards between people, specifically between teachers and students, between teachers and teachers, between teachers and school administrators, and between teachers and parents.

This group includes six criteria: 1) Friendships and relationships in the school community; 2) 'Teacher's attitude and positivity; 3) Respect for differences; 4) Positivity, the values of cooperation, and practice; 5) The health and working conditions of teachers; and 6) 'Teachers' skills and competencies.

**Process:** Are the processes, policies, and activities designed to operate the school reasonable or not? Students will find it difficult to be happy when they have to deal with a considerable amount of homework every day and have no time for rest and entertainment, just as it is hard for teachers to create happy classrooms for their students with an overburdened curriculum, intense achievement pressures, meager support tools, and limited salaries.

This group includes nine criteria: 1) Reasonable and fair workload; 2) Teamwork and cooperation spirit; 3) Interesting and engaging teaching and learning methods; 4) Students are free, creative, and involved; 5) Sense of achievement, achievement; 6) Extracurricular activities and school events; 7) Learning as a group between teachers and students; 8) Useful, relevant and attractive learning content; and 9) Mental health and stress management.

**Place:** The physical and cultural spaces make the school a safe, student-friendly environment. There will be no dirty toilets or school violence.

This group includes seven criteria: 1) Friendly and warm learning environment; 2) Safe environment, no bullying; 3) Green, friendly place to study and play; 4) Vision and leadership; 5) Positive Discipline; 6) Good health, improved school sanitation, and nutrition; and 7) Democratic school management.

### **3.2. The Flourishing School Culture Model**

The Association of Christian Schools International has developed the Flourishing School Culture Model, which believes that the prosperity and happiness of students will depend on happy, prosperous educators (ASSI, 2023). For educators to be prosperous and happy, schools must be built in a prosperous way, ensuring five important criteria:

The educational purpose is clear, focused, and oriented by the school’s leaders and consistent with the educational philosophy and views of all students and teachers.

Social relationships connect and create a firm belief for the relationships between teachers - students, students - students, teachers - teachers, teachers - parents. When trust in school relationships is strengthened, it is a solid foundation for a sustainable, positive and happy learning environment.

Learning orientation is suitable for ‘learners’ abilities and attitudes in the educational program the school is implementing. The educational content should ensure appropriateness and help students develop a suitable capacity and positive attitude towards society.

Expertise and other resources are guaranteed for a thriving school. What makes a difference in the quality of education toward the satisfaction and happiness of learners lies in the knowledge, experience, and professional skills of the teachers and school leaders. In addition, the school needs other social resources (in coordination with educational forces outside the school) to strengthen educational activities to create conditions for development and a good playground for exchange and entertainment.

Well-being is the school’s most important strategy in determining the success of building a successful and happy school. Seminars or programs on psychological prevention, mental health care, teambuilding between teachers and students, students with students, and teachers with teachers are very important to their happiness towards their learning and educational experiences at school. In addition, a prosperous school is also a place where school psychology services are taken care of and recognized as a ‘guideline’ in enhancing happiness for students and teachers.

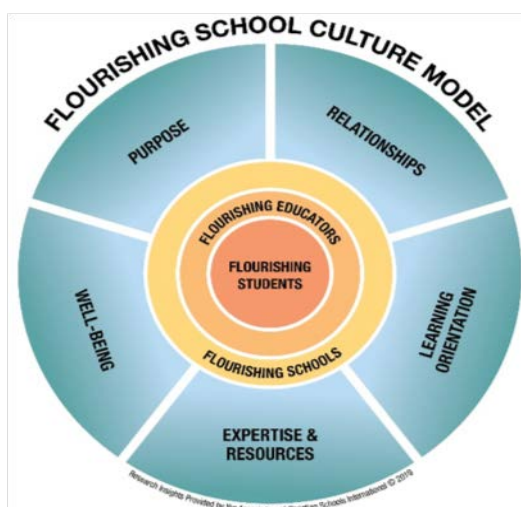


Figure 2. The Flourishing School Culture Model

Thus, a flourishing school is still oriented to learners and teachers in which the spiritual element is still the core, not material or issues related to financial and economic values.

### 3.3. Culture of School Improvement Model

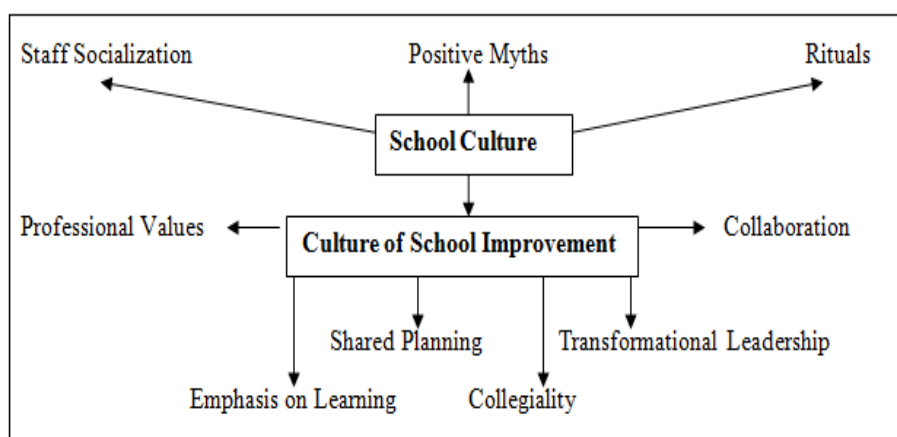
Culture of School Improvement Model (Nilesh, 2016; Robert, 1997, 1998) is a school model that aims to build behavioural cultural values and create happiness and safety for students and teachers through building sequentially build 2 components: School culture and constructive school culture.

To build a school culture, leaders need to pay attention to three elements:

**Staff Socialization:** Taking care of the material and spiritual life of teachers is an important part of motivating them to devote more to their work. However, the socialization of teachers, helping them realize the role of their social contribution to their attachment, creating satisfaction, and creating happiness for learners, is even more important in modern society.

**Positive Myths:** To create a positive school culture, schools need to have positive stories that tell about the school’s name, founding date, important milestones, the history that the school has gone through, and the achievements and dedication of the teachers and students to the school through the stages. These stories are actively and passively communicated yearly to record, remember, and preserve the school’s traditions.

**Rituals:** School etiquette is an integral part of building a happy school culture. Ceremonies include materials that are ‘schooled’ and used within the school, such as the school’s theme song, logo, mission statement, the core values of students and teachers, the school’s staff, and the school’s special exercises/dances/images. The ritual helps the school’s image to be consolidated and deepened over the years.



**Figure 3.** Culture of School Improvement Model

To build a constructive school culture, it is necessary to pay attention to six elements:

**Professional values:** related to the importance of the organization and the need to develop schools based on pedagogical principles.

**Emphasis on learning:** creating a learning community committed to career

development and improving student outcomes.

Collectiveness: empowers teachers to make professional assessments through the development of supportive interpersonal relationships.

Collaboration: an interaction between teachers in which information is shared on school governance issues, including curriculum.

Joint Planning: this is a collective process by which a shared school vision is realized through sound planning.

Transformational leaders: share power and facilitate school development to capture human potential and teacher commitment.

### 3.4. The Well-being School Model

#### 3.4.1. The Well-being School Model of Kevin Palmer

The Well-being School model focuses heavily on aspects of improving the perceived well-being of educational forces in schools with seven specific actions (Kevin, 2020):



**Figure 4.** The Well-being School Model of Kevin Palmer

Model and develop leadership in learning: Each student is a leader for himself, pursuing personal learning goals and constantly developing and reinforcing them. In the practice component, leadership skills are emphasized in the school’s educational contents and activities.

Develop and implement collective vision and goals: In this aspect, the school will focus on developing the ability to connect the educational forces towards a shared vision and goal of the class, the collective, a block, and the entire school. Both teachers and learners have the same educational viewpoint.

Provide and support continuous learning and development for all school personnel: Teachers and school staff play an important role in enhancing the happiness of students and colleagues. Therefore, in a happy school, this team is always cared for and creates all conditions for continuous learning and personal and career development.

Foster the spirit of group learning and individual collaboration: Peer education model, peer support between teachers and teachers, teachers and school staff are always focused so that they support each other in work and life.

Creating a culture of inquiry, discovery, and creativity: The spirit of self-study, self-study, and always curiosity about new knowledge and skills are promoted in a happy learning environment because only through continuous activities and continuous personal development, students and teachers understand themselves better and identify their need for happiness, their journey to happiness, and how to feel happiness.

Encourage the spirit of collecting and exchanging learning knowledge between learners and teachers: Through this process of collecting and exchanging knowledge, learners can consolidate and perfect their knowledge with friends and teachers, and teachers can better understand 'learners' abilities and attitudes toward learning. From this connection, teachers and learners will understand each other better and know how to reconcile the school relationship towards a feeling of happiness in the classroom and at school.

Social learning: Learning from resources outside the society, or more broadly, other education systems, create opportunities for learners to expand their knowledge, connect knowledge with real life, and learn and practice simultaneously.

3.4.2. The Well-being School Model of Anne Konu

The Well-being School Model proposed by Anne Konu (2002) has a close combination of family, community, and society in educating students. In schools, learning activities and teaching and educational activities are based on the foundation of happiness, including four factors: having, loving, health, and being.

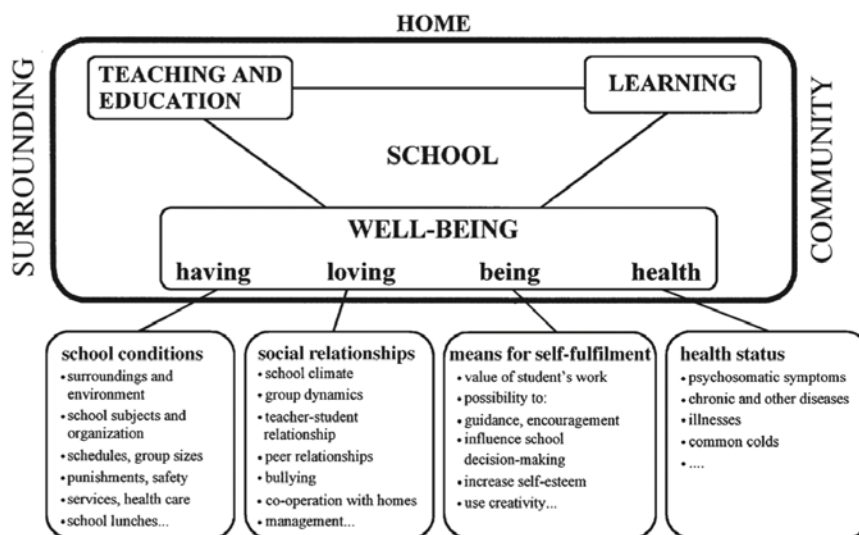


Figure 5. The Well-being School Model of Anne Konu

Having: includes the physical environment around the school and inside the school. Conditions to be ensured include a safe, educational environment, coziness, noise, ventilation, and temperature. Another aspect of learning conditions relates to the learning

environment, including at least the curriculum, group size, study schedule, and punishment. In addition, services for students such as school lunches, health care, and counselling are also included.

Social relationships (loving): refers to the social learning environment, student-teacher relationships, relationships with classmates, group dynamics, bullying, cooperation between schools and housing, decision-making in schools, and the atmosphere of the entire school organization. The school environment and the learning environment impact the happiness and well-being of students in the school. In this, the relationship of the school with the surrounding community is important (for example, the relationship between social issues and the health care system).

The meaning of school (meaning): can be seen as the way the school facilitates the self-improvement of each student. Every student should be considered an equally important member of the school community. Students can participate in decision-making that affects their studies and other aspects of school life related to themselves. Positive learning experiences will enhance students' self-actualization. Tailored instruction for each student, along with guidance and encouragement, creates positive experiences for learners.

Health: it is the absence of disease and infirmity. Health includes both physical and mental health. Health is also an important tool for achieving happiness. In schools, health is a resource and an essential part of happiness.

### 3.5. The Comprehensive School Model of Bellwether Education

Bellwether Education's Comprehensive School Model: four components and four processes to build a happy, comprehensive school: (1) Student success, (2) Beliefs and mindsets, (3) Methods, and (4) System. Each element will include important objectives, content, and strategies to achieve.

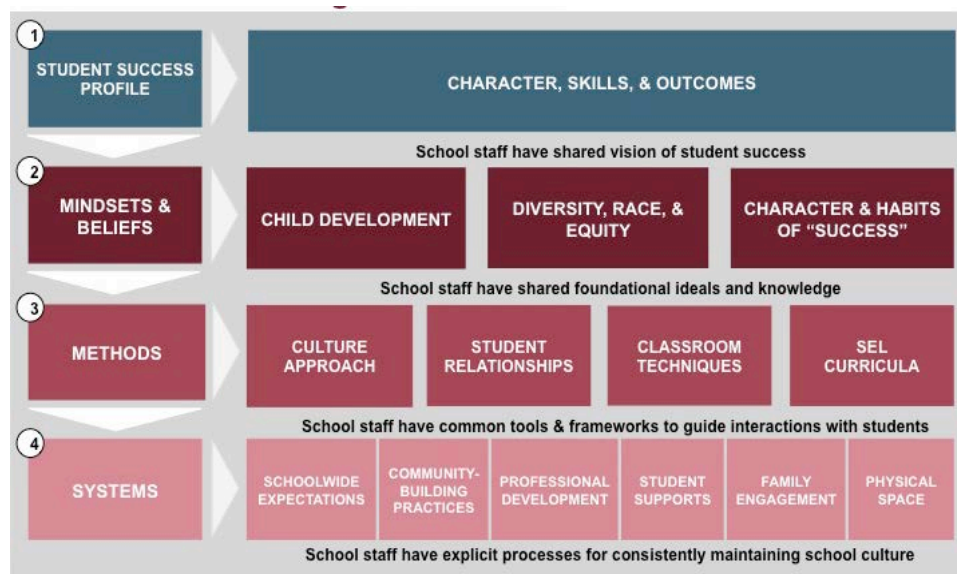


Figure 6. Bellwether Education's Comprehensive School Model



**Student Success:** The school staff collectively share, guide, motivate, and share the same goals towards promoting student success in three areas: character, skills, and achievement.

**Beliefs and mindsets:** The school's staff members share and promote ideas and practical, foundational knowledge with students to form a positive mindset and belief in themselves as well as relationships, which focuses on understanding age-psychological development; diversity and equality in terms of gender, ethnicity, and skin colour; and personality and preferences for success.

**Methods:** The school staff collective has the tools and common cultural criteria framework to guide students to practice positive values. Cultural approaches, intercultural behaviours, active teaching techniques and methods, and socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs are tools and frameworks that are proven to contribute to the happiness and success of students and teachers in schools.

**System:** The school staff collective has transparent processes to maintain, strengthen and continuously develop school culture, including the process of polling the whole school on school culture; the practical process of building a school cultural community; the professional development process and professional competence for teachers; student support process; the process of connecting and working with the family; and the health training process.

Thus, there are quite a few models of happy schools in the world. Each model has its advantages and limitations based on the approach and the context and socio-economic conditions of the area where the model is applied. In Vietnam, the happy school model developed by the Education Trade Union is based on UNESCO's 3P model. This model has quite clear and specific criteria and is suitable to the practical conditions of Vietnam, so it is more feasible.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

##### **4.1. Conclusion**

The article has synthesized and analyzed six models of happy schools internationally. Each model has its characteristics, including specific components and requirements to be applied and deployed.

In Vietnam, the construction of happy schools has received much attention since 2019, associated with the implementation of the plan to improve the capacity of pedagogical and ethical behaviour of teachers and employees to meet the requirements in the new situation of the Vietnam Education Trade Union. Next, the Education Trade Union issued guidelines on building a happy school, including three criteria: school environment and personal development, teaching and learning relationships inside and outside the school.

To be able to deploy the construction of happy schools in Vietnam, it is necessary to have scientific and methodical studies on related issues to propose a specific, appropriate, and feasible model.

#### 4.2. Recommendation

Vietnam has officially implemented the 2018 general education curriculum for three years with important initial results. To continue implementing the general education curriculum effectively, building a happy school is one of the necessary conditions for developing learners' quality and competence.

To build a happy school in Vietnam, it is necessary to have synchronous coordination between the management staff, teachers, and students.

For managers:

Building and organizing the school according to the happy school model oriented on: strategy, vision, goals, school development planning, and core values.

Recruitment, management, and assignment of work; examine, evaluate and classify teachers and staff; implement reward and discipline work for teachers and employees by the law and according to the human criteria for a happy school.

Student management and student activities are organized by the school according to the happy school model.

Implement regimes and policies for teachers, staff, and students so that school members can feel happy.

For teachers:

Organizing teaching and educational activities according to the school's educational plan and the educational plan of the professional group, inspiring students to go to school, meeting the needs and rights to study, and teaching education.

Manage students in educational activities organized by the school with love, respect, and responsibility.

Fostering the quality of teachers, study and practice to develop professional capacity according to the regulations and according to the human criteria of a happy school.

For students:

Carry out learning and training tasks according to the school's educational program and plan with joy, motivation, positivity, and initiative so that learning and training are suitable for interests, forte, and aptitude.

Respect, love, and have positive behaviour towards parents, officials, teachers, school staff, and elders; unite and help each other in learning and training; implementation of the school's charter and rules; and obey the laws of the State.

Participating in collective activities of schools, classes, Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneers Team, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union; helping families, participating in labour and social activities, and environmental protection activities; and implementing traffic order and safety.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**MỘT SỐ MÔ HÌNH TRƯỜNG HỌC HẠNH PHÚC TRÊN THẾ GIỚI  
VÀ KHUYẾN NGHỊ ÁP DỤNG TẠI VIỆT NAM**

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**TÓM TẮT**

*Bài viết này cung cấp một số mô hình trường học hạnh phúc trên thế giới và đưa ra những khuyến nghị áp dụng tại Việt Nam. Thông qua phương pháp nghiên cứu văn bản, tài liệu, bài viết tổng hợp, đánh giá một số mô hình cùng với những yêu cầu cụ thể của từng mô hình trường học hạnh phúc. Dựa trên điều kiện thực tiễn của xã hội và giáo dục Việt Nam, nhất là trong bối cảnh thực hiện chương trình giáo dục phổ thông năm 2018, bài viết đề xuất một số khuyến nghị để có thể từng bước hiện thực hóa mô hình trường học hạnh phúc trong thực tế. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy có khá nhiều mô hình trường học hạnh phúc trên thế giới với những hướng dẫn, tiêu chuẩn cụ thể có thể triển khai áp dụng được ở Việt Nam để nâng cao mức độ cảm nhận hạnh phúc của học sinh, giáo viên và các lực lượng giáo dục khác trong nhà trường.*

**Từ khóa:** hạnh phúc; trường học hạnh phúc; mô hình; tiêu chuẩn