

MY BEST POSSIBLE LEARNING SELF: PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

A small pilot study (N=197) asked primary school children from seven classes to draw a self-portrait of their best possible learning self (BPLS) and add words and phrases to describe what it entailed. While visualising and writing about best possible selves activities have well documented benefits for health and well-being and for goal setting and providing insights into motivation, we were curious about the potential of BPLS to reveal how children perceive themselves as learners and to understand what motivates them. We conducted a reflexive inquiry analysis and found that BPLSs were expressed across four broad categories of personal qualities: academic/learning related qualities, psychological traits, social orientation and extra-curricular interests and abilities. The results provide insights into how primary school children perceive happiness and success, and may help to provide an understanding of what influences primary school children's positive sense of self in the classroom.

Keywords: Best possible learning selves; Best possible selves; Happiness and success; Positive children; Positivity and learning

INTRODUCTION

Positivity and a positive disposition are central to supporting successful learning in the classroom and maintaining the "flourishing" of social-emotional well-being (Kelly, Hills, Huebner & McQuillin, 2012). Classrooms are characterised by challenge, and positive personal qualities like resilience, optimism, agency and confidence play an important role in effective learning. So too does having "character strengths and virtues" outlined by Peterson & Seligman (2004) that include: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity; justice; temperance; and, transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Positively oriented young people attend to challenges with ease, persist in the face of complexity or ambiguity, and find most life experiences meaningful and of personal value (Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma & van Dulmen, 2006).

Learning experiences in schools and classrooms mediate many young people's important developmental milestones, including motivation, identity development and overall academic success (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2014). While there is empirical evidence that targeted interventions such as visualising one's 'best self' can increase and sustain positivity in adults (Layous, Nelson & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Peters, Flink, Boersma & Linton, 2010; Sampson, 2012; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), there is still little research into the potential of such interventions for enhancing young children's experiences of school, and their efficacy. We were also curious about the potential of the concept of best possible learning self (BPLS) for providing insights into young school-aged children's perceptions of themselves as learners. As a starting point, this article focuses on how young school-aged

children perceive and experience happiness and success for themselves in relation to classroom learning.

WHAT IS A BPLS?

The construct 'best possible self' has been defined as comprising idiographic representations of goals encompassing the futures that people can imagine for themselves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Studies show that writing about one's best possible self can improve self-regulation through the opportunity to learn about oneself, clearly explore and articulate life goals, and illuminate, integrate and restructure one's priorities (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). In trying to foster active and engaged classroom learners, we were most interested in the potential of such an activity to generate expressions of young children's priorities, motivations and values towards learning (as work by researchers such as Emmons, 1986; Little, 1989; and Omodei & Wearing, 1990 has shown in adults).

Currently, best possible self (BPS) activities require participants to express their ideas in writing and exercises that entail the regular visualisation and written exploration of what being a 'BPS' might entail (Layous et al., 2013; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). However, it seemed likely that for the young children in our study (aged between 6 and 10 years), there would be a wide range of literacy skills and abilities, and such a reflective writing task would be a relatively unfamiliar activity. Rather than rely solely on writing as a representation of children's BPLS, we explored the idea of incorporating a drawing, such as a self-portrait, into the task to encourage reflective writing that we could analyse. We were guided in this by approaches commonly used in research with children in classrooms (Benard, 1995; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

BPLS thus became a graphic and idiographic representation of children's response to the task. The children were asked to draw and annotate pictures of themselves when they were being their best selves as learners in the classroom – when they felt happy and successful as learners. The drawings and annotations (words and phrases) that the children produced provided insights into their perceptions of the personal qualities, dispositions and experiences they deemed to be important and valuable for being their BPLS in the classroom. In turn, these drawings and annotations provided a basis for our investigation into how Primary school-aged children construe and construct their 'best possible learning selves'.

STUDY CONTEXT, METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

The Context

This pilot study involved seven classes including one Year 2 class (N=23), four Year 3 classes (N=93), two Year 4 classes (N=54) and one Year 3/4 combined class (N=27). The students all attended the same Queensland school, approximately 25 kilometres from the central business district (CBD) of Brisbane, Australia. A total of 197 students including 107 males and 90 female students are included in this pilot study.

This Queensland school has an index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) above the average score of other Australian primary schools. The ICSEA accounts for the school's geographical location, the proportion of Indigenous students at the school and the students' family background, including their parents' occupations and educational levels. This index is used primarily to make meaningful comparison of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) on the My School website (www.myschool.edu.au) by parents, educators and administrators.

Information consent from parents/guardians and then from the children was obtained. Securing this informed consent of the children was done in collaboration with the classroom

teachers, where the process of research was explained in ways the children could understand. Questions were invited and the children completing the task understood that their response would be used to understand how they were thinking, and would be shared with other researchers, teachers and interested parties in published articles.

The Methods and Selected Samples from the Data Collection

Purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2013) was used in this study. This means that the primary school students from multiple year levels were deliberately chosen provide in-depth knowledge about their perceptions on learning. The teachers asked their students to draw portraits of themselves as their BPLS, and to add words and phrases to describe these traits or qualities. During these classes, we observed the students as they undertook this activity, offered encouragement and any clarifications needed, and collected their drawings when completed. Each drawing was scanned electronically and then imported into NVivo software for ease of management during the thematic analysis phase. Samples of the drawings collected are included in Figures 1 to 4.



Figure 1: BPLS from a female student in a Year 2 classroom



Figure 2: BPLS from a male student in a Year 3 classroom



Figure 3: BPLS from a female student in a Year 3/4 classroom

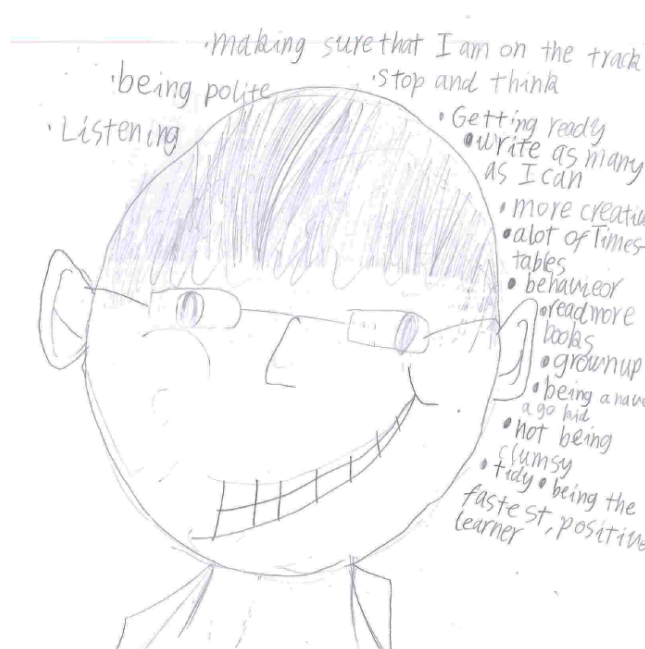


Figure 4: BPLS from a male student in a Year 4 classroom

As part of the BPLS activity, a smaller sub-set of the sample ($N=45$) also had the opportunity to provide a written response to an additional question, ‘If you had one magic wish that could help you be your best possible learning self, what would it be?’ A convenience sample of children volunteered to complete this task as they felt that they had completed their BPLS task. These written annotations were thematically analysed, adhering to exactly the same methods described above for the BPLS self-portraits. An example of a magic wish annotation is provided below (see Figure 5). The results from the magic wish analysis are reported in a post-script following the main results section in this article.

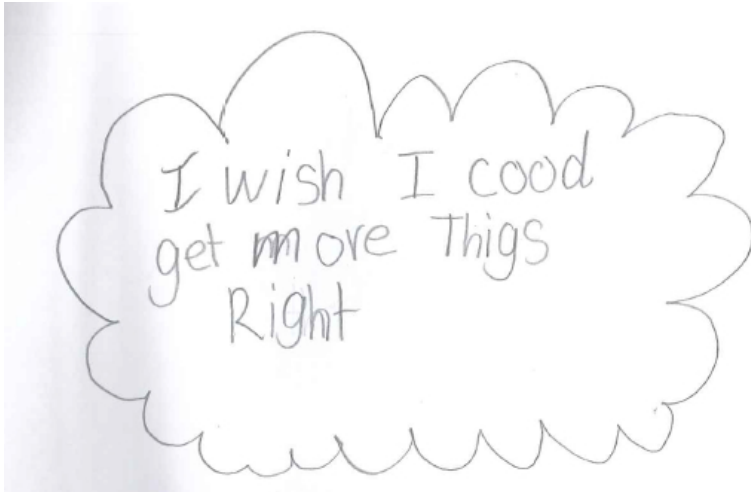


Figure 5: Magic wish of a female student in a Year 3/4 classroom

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

A reflexive inquiry analytic (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009) was used in this study. This affords an experience-oriented, interpretive perspective that we find helpful in researching the perceptions and self-reported experiences of students in classrooms. Reflexive analysis is characterised by successive interpretation, a mode of analysis that enables the researcher to move intelligently and with reasoned deliberation between different types of data to make sense of (and meaning from) them, and to take account of the situational and contextual elements at play. Importantly, the reflexive method entails reflection on several levels, or directed at several themes at once (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Since this study is characterised by an innovative integration of different forms of expression and perceptions offered by the participants (children's drawings and annotations in response to a task), the reflexive methodology enabled our conscious attention to be directed concurrently to both the data at hand (sources of knowledge) and our interpretations of that data (development of new knowledge). In this way the reflexive inquiry analytic enables researchers to produce integrative analyses and interpretations of rich but multifaceted data sources (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

The data set consisted of the children's drawings, annotated with words and phrases. The reflexive analytic process entailed interpretive analyses of the data as a whole, in conjunction with visual analysis techniques (Ganesh, 2011). This iterative process enabled us to accommodate the drawings as well as the text as a focus for this analysis. However, for ease of reporting, this report presents a thematic categorisation of the *words and phrases* used by the children in their BPLS drawings.

Thematic categorisation of the children's responses required an initial coding process to identify the range and meaningfully different types of the words and phrases used by the children to describe their BPLS. This process generated an initial list of themes that was then iteratively validated across the data set. To do this, each coded word was grouped into clusters of 'like words', or words that appeared to represent similar kinds of perceptions. This clustering helped to refine the process of coding and the development of themes. Using the BPLS drawings presented earlier as examples, in Figure 3 the words 'creative, deep thinker and writer' were initially clustered together, while the words 'helpful, friendly and gentle' made up a different cluster. Similarly the words in Figure 2, such as 'inventive, thinking, paying attention, and learning', were clustered separately from 'positive, smiling and trying

my best'. Across the drawings, we then identified large clusters that represented semantically similar ideas (e.g. words about learning from Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 included writing, paying attention, deep thinker, and stop and think; words about attitude from Figures 2, 3 and 4 included friendly, nice, kind and being polite). Eventually, distinctive clusters were identified in the analysis, which in turn informed the development of thematic 'categories' – which we refer to here as 'categories of students' perceptions of happiness and success in primary classrooms'.

RESULTS

The children in this study expressed their BPLS across four distinctively different categories. These categories represent perceptions of personal qualities, experiences and dispositions that the children deemed to be part of their BPLS in classrooms, and entailed: (1) academic or learning related qualities; (2) psychological traits and dispositions; (3) an orientation to social connectedness and participation; and (4) identifying with extra-curricular areas of personal interest.

Across the sample, the most commonly articulated perceptions of being a 'BPLS' were related to *academics or learning*. At 59.62 per cent, these perceptions were articulated twice as frequently as the psychological traits (24.64 per cent), three times more frequently than social experiences (10.16 per cent), and ten times more frequently than extra-curricular personal interests (5.58 per cent). These categories of the students' perceptions and their frequency of expression overall are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of primary school children's perceptions of BPLS and frequency of the perceptions expressed across the cohort (N=197)

Category	Words coded to orientation	Percentage
Academic and learning-related qualities	663	59.62
Psychological traits and dispositions	274	24.64
Orientations to social connectedness and participation	113	10.16
Identifying with extra-curricular personal interests	62	5.58
Total words coded to each orientation	1112	100.00

This is unsurprising, since the task requires children to reflect on and represent themselves in relation to classroom learning; however, it is the specifics of what the children identify and express in terms of being their BPLS that are of most interest to us here. To our knowledge, there are few other studies that offer insight into how children conceptualise their learning identities, or that articulate children's perceptions of what – in their view – constitutes their BPLS.

Academic or Learning-related Dimensions of BPLS

Of the total words coded (1112), 663 were coded within this category, which represented more than the other three categories combined. The words and phrases that we

coded within the academic or learning-related qualities category were those related to learning and thinking, specific types of thinking processes, specific curriculum references (such as ‘being good at maths’) and terms/words we found to generally relate to the processes of learning (paying attention, listening, keeping up, remembering).

Sub-categories of Academic/learning Related BPLS

Within this category, a close analysis revealed that students’ perceptions of academic or learning qualities related to BPLS fell within three distinctive sub-categories of interest: curriculum-specific perceptions, deep learning perceptions and surface learning perceptions. These are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Sub-categories of students’ perceptions of the academic and learning-related qualities relevant to their BPLS

Sub-categories	Words coded to orientation	Percentage
Academic and learning-related qualities	663	59.62
Curriculum-specific experiences	(334)	
Maths	104	30.03
Writing	69	
Spelling	48	
Reading	46	
Art (drawing, music and drama)	43	
Science	24	
Deep level learning experiences	(151)	13.58
Focusing/concentrating	50	
Creative	42	
Thinker/thinking	27	
Imaginative	19	
Understanding	13	
Surface level learning experience	(178)	16.01
Listening	64	
Completing work	32	
Concentrating	27	
Keeping up	25	
Being organised	18	
Being smart	12	

Curriculum Specific Perceptions

The first sub-category of perceptions reflects students’ sense of being the best learners they can be in relation to curriculum-specific experiences or preferences. This sub-category was the most popular of the academic and learning-related perceptions, with 334 comments reflecting curriculum-specific experiences or preferences. Of those perceptions, literacy-related experiences (writing, reading and spelling) were the most common at 163, and numeracy or mathematics (including financial education described by students as money) followed closely at 104. The rest of the perceptions in this sub-category entailed occasional references to the arts (art, drawing and drama) at 43 and lastly science at 24.

The next two sub-categories were analytically devised in tandem as the researchers recognised parallels between what these students identified within the academic and learning-related category and research on conceptions of learning (Marton, Dall'Alba, & Beaty, 1993) and approaches to learning (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Entwistle & Entwistle, 1997; Entwistle, Tait & McCune, 2000; Marton & Säljö 1976; Swanberg & Martinsen, 2010). This research emphasises that, from an applied viewpoint, the ways in which students conceptualise and articulate their approach to learning are indicative of different intentions and motivations when facing a learning situation, and may indeed reflect particular types of processing (Entwistle, Tait & McCune, 2000). Most recently, researchers have found that approaches to learning predict academic achievement (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Swanberg & Martinsen, 2010).

In the original work by Marton & Säljö (1976), and expanded upon by Marton, et al. (1993), a deep approach to learning was characterised by learning strategies and behaviours (such as higher order thinking, relating ideas and gaining meaningful comprehension), and reflected student's deliberate intentions to understand the learning material and incorporate it into their way of thinking about the world. These students indicated an authentic interest in the subject matter they were learning. In contrast, other students indicated an intention to simply reproduce the learning materials for a specific, short-term purpose (such as passing an exam). Importantly, the learning strategies they employed were distinctively different from those of their 'deep learning' peers, and included surface-level behaviours such as rote learning and memorisation, and simplistic conceptions of learning such as remembering facts or being able to recall information (Marton et al. 1993). With this theoretical frame of reference in mind, we identified two sub-categories within our students' descriptions of their BPLS, the first related to *deep learning* intentions and perceptions, and the second reflecting *surface learning* intentions and perceptions.

Deep Learning Perceptions and Surface Learning Perceptions

The deep learning perceptions sub-category included notions of being creative (42 students) and imaginative (19 students), as well as descriptive words about thinking (26 students), understanding (thirteen students) and focusing or concentrating (50 students). We coded a total of 151 student comments that reflected deep learning approaches or conceptions within this sub-category of the BPLS. In contrast, the surface learning perceptions sub-category included student's perceptions of being engaged in the learning activity but in less substantial ways, such as listening (64 students), being smart (twelve students), completing work (32 students), being organised (18 students) and keeping up (25 students). A total of 178 comments relating to simplistic or surface level learning we coded within this sub-category.

In summary, the students' perceptions of being their BPLS in the classroom entailed 59.62 per cent academic and learning related qualities. More than half of those perceptions were expressed as curriculum specific qualities (such as being good at mathematics, or writing), with rest split relatively evenly between conceptions of learning as entailing either deep and meaningful activities (such as being imaginative or thinking) or superficial approaches (such as listening and being smart).

Personal Psychological Dimensions of BPLS

Students' expressions of their BPLS also commonly included descriptions of specific individual psychological traits or dispositions. The most common of these was about 'trying my best' (49 students), and may have reflected the widely promoted school philosophy of encouraging students to do their best. However, it is valuable to report that they had incorporated this into their personal descriptions of happiness and success as a learner in the classroom.

On the other hand, the range and type of personal psychological traits that were expressed also reflected a number of dispositions that were not necessarily explicit in the school philosophy. These entailed words and phrases that reflected positively orientated psychological traits considered in the literature to be beneficial to learning, as they bolster resilience and determination (Benard, 1995; Fredrickson, 1998; 2002; Schunk, 1991). They are also identified as important protective factors for young children due to their potential to offset challenging situations, countering the possibility of disengagement from schooling (Benard, 1991). Finding that these factors were present within these expressions of BPLS is thus of high interest. For this reason, we have separated out comments that indicated *positive psychological resources* from other more general *positive personal qualities* expressed, such as being kind or respectful. The sub-categories of personal psychological traits found in the children's BPLS within this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Sub-categories of students' perceptions of personal psychological traits relevant to being their BPLS

Sub-categories	Words coded to orientation	Percentage
Personal psychological traits	274	24.64
Positive psychological resources	(191)	17.18
Trying my best	49	
Being positive/happy	42	
Being sensible/responsible/ behaving		
Determined	35	
Prepared	14	
Being engaged/present/energetic/ interested	10	
Humour	10	
Believing in your abilities/resilient	10	
Confident	11	
Positive personal qualities	(83)	7.46
Kind	36	
Dreamer (has dreams for the future)		
Safe	14	
Love	12	
Respectful	11	
	10	

Comments such as trying my best (49 citations), being positive (42 citations), being responsible (35 citations), being determined (14 citations) and believing in your abilities (10) were collated under the 'positive psychological traits' sub-category, as they reflected the kinds of positive psychological resources noted in the literature (Fredrickson, 2002). Comments about being kind (36 citations), being aspirational/a dreamer, feeling safe and being respectful were also considered to be positive, but were allocated as 'personal qualities' identified by the students.

The Social Dimension of BPLS

For the young students in this study, perceptions of BPLS included having a sense of connection and of being part of a community of learners. Words and phrases coded within

this category were cited 113 times and constituted 10.16 per cent of the responses. The most commonly expressed perceptions within this category were descriptions of participating in the activities of the classroom along with others (47 citations). We view perceptions such as sharing, cooperating, being part of a classroom community, and being inclusive and friendly as closely related to this theme, which we clustered together here as social connectedness. These perceptions could be distinguished from others that seemed to reflect a sense of social responsibility and of making a contribution to other students' experiences of learning within the classroom. These included comments about being happy for others, standing up for others, being a role model for others and being helpful to others (frequently nominated at 28). These perceptions have been clustered under the theme of social contributions. Table 4 outlines the range of perceptions that related to social connectedness and contribution found in the children's BPLS.

Table 4: Subcategories of students' perceptions of BPLS that related to social connectedness and contribution

Sub-categories	Words coded to orientation	Percentage
Social connectedness and contribution	113	10.16
Connectedness (to the community)	(85)	7.64
Participating	47	
Sharing, cooperating	11	
Classroom community (Inclusive and friendly)	27	
Contributions to the community	(28)	2.52
Being helpful, help others and happy for others	28	

The Extra-curricular Dimensions of BPLS

A much smaller number of students drew from their extra-curricular experiences within their descriptions and drawings of being their 'BPLS', despite the teacher's and researcher's encouragement to think about being *in* the classroom.

Table 5: Extra-curricular personal interests and requirements for BPLS identified by primary school children

Extra-curricular interests and requirements	Words coded to orientation	Percentage
Extra-curricular personal interests or requirements	62	5.58
Sport and physical activity (sport and being active)	38	3.42
Gamer (video games)	14	1.26
Personal requirements – sleep	10	0.90

Field notes of conversations with those students taken during the production of the drawings and responses indicate that an extra-curricular dimension was indeed important to their perception of being their best self as a learner. Table 5 outlines the extra-curricular personal interests and requirements that children articulated within their BPLS.

The most commonly cited comments coded as extra-curricular personal interests were related to sporting interests or portrayals of self in sport-related contexts (such as soccer, netball and football). These were all coded under *sport and physical activity* (38 students),

since some students simply described ‘being active’ and others identified a specific sport. This category was created to acknowledge the very visible way in which some students held fast to an extra-curricular identity (I’m a dancer, I’m a soccer player, I like to be active) as part of their description of their BPLS. Other areas of extra-curricular interest that children articulated as influential or a key part of their BPLS included qualities related to *being a gamer* (proficient with video games) (14 students) and personal requirements as such getting enough sleep (10 students). A summary of all of the students BPLS responses and how they were coded to each category is shown by year and gender in Table 6.

Table 6: BPLS of primary school students by gender and year

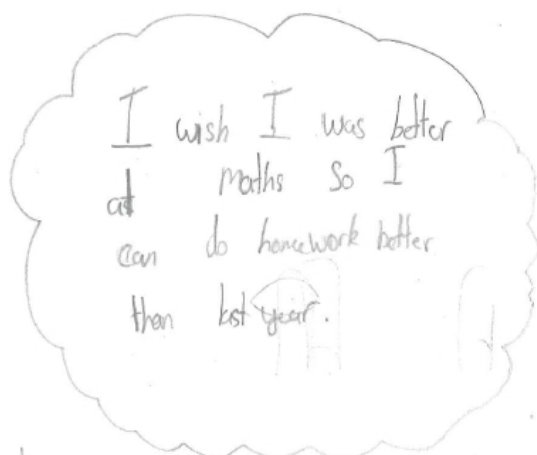
Categories	Total	Males	Females	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 3/4	Yr 4
Academic or learning related qualities	663	341	322	95	227	126	215
Psychological traits	274	126	148	17	153	48	56
Experiences of social connectedness and participation	113	56	57	10	64	27	12
Extra-curricular personal interests	62	38	24	20	14	18	10
Total words coded to each orientation	1112	561	551	142	458	219	293

RESULTS POSTSCRIPT: MY MAGIC WISH

As a part of the BPLS activity, a smaller subset of the sample had the opportunity to add a written annotation to an additional question, ‘If you had one magic wish that could help you be your best possible learning self, what would it be?’ A total of 45 students, drawn from Year 2 (n=21), Year 3/4 (n=15) and Year 4 (n=9) responded. The thought cloud drawn by the student in Figure 6 is an example of how the children responded to this part of the task.

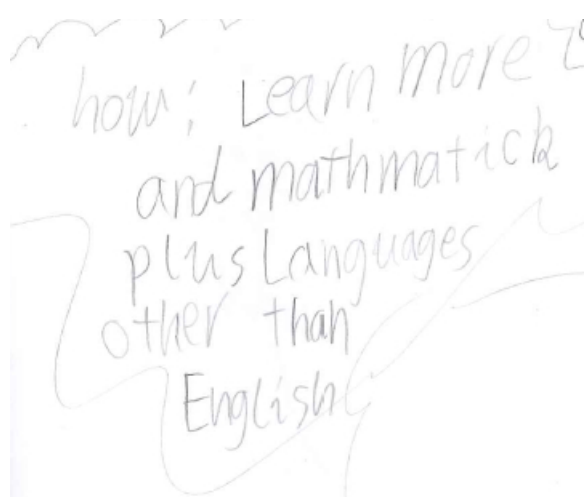
Using the same coding scheme as described for BPLS analysis, the students’ magic wishes were analysed. In total, 83 words were coded to one of the four categories, with 75 words coded against academic and learning-related experiences, only three words coded as psychological traits, experiences of social connectedness and participation, and a mere two words coded as extra-curricular personal interest.

An examination of the academic and learning related experiences further revealed that 72 per cent of these magic wishes were curriculum specific (18.7 per cent were coded to surface level learning experiences and 9.3 per cent to deep level learning experiences), and this was similar for both males (with 29 words coded) and females (25 words coded), as well as for Year 2 (28 words coded), Year 3/4 (14 words coded) and Year 4 (12 words coded). Suffice to say that a confident understanding of core areas of learning such as mathematics and English was the magic wish these primary school children made most frequently (and fervently). Some examples of the written annotations students recorded as their magic wish are provided in Figures 6 to 8.



I wish I was better
at maths so I
can do homework better
than last year.

Figure 6: Magic wish of a female student in a Year 2 classroom



how; Learn more &
and mathematick
plus Languages
other than
English

Figure 7: Magic wish of a male student in a Year 4 classroom

I wish to be
better at spelling
(I'm only the averidge)

Figure 8: Magic wish of a female student in a Year 4 classroom

As these examples illustrate, the 'magic wish' component of the BPLS activity was a poignant experience, with many of these young children expressing genuine concerns about the challenges they faced in their learning. It was striking to read how seamlessly recent classroom experiences translated into generalised views of self as a learner. See, for example, the final comment in Figure 6, 'I'm only averidge'. Another example was a young child in Year 3 who began crying while completing the 'magic wish' activity. While the feeling in the room was visibly muted compared with the earlier part of the BPLS activity, this young girl

was clearly distressed. The teacher sat down to comfort her and reassured her that she did not have to continue if she didn't feel like it. The girl countered tearfully, 'Oh no, I really want to do it. It's just that there are so many things wrong with me I can't fix them all with just one wish.' She was inconsolable. Needless to say, the teacher swiftly outlined the range of strengths and abilities that the child regularly demonstrated in the classroom, and she was soon surrounded by her peers, who reaffirmed those messages. However, the point is how quickly and surreptitiously negative self-images can form, especially in busy classrooms that emphasise (albeit unintentionally) academic achievement over other forms of success.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING COMMENT

This research provides the students with a voice about how they are experiencing learning and more importantly what they perceive as most important. The aim of this article was to outline how primary school children perceive their BPLS. In this study, the BPLS represented a graphic and idiographic way for young children to capture and portray their learning goals and aspirational learning identities. While research indicates that articulating best possible self (BPS) can contribute to enhanced motivation, goal-setting and subjective well-being (Layous et al., 2013; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006); our intention was to develop and trial the BPLS as a tool that could potentially reveal how young children perceive happiness and success in the classroom, and in time provide a means through which young children may be able to focus their learning goals and aspirations in personally meaningful and positive ways.

While the sample here was relatively small ($N=197$), the results make a unique contribution to the literature, as there are few studies in this area to date. The primary school children in this study responded enthusiastically to the BPLS task, and visibly enjoyed the opportunity to express their BPLS. While the task was open ended, in that they could select any words or phrases to express their 'BPLS – what it means to feel happy and successful in the classroom', their responses thematically clustered across four distinctive categories, which articulated a range of personal qualities, experiences and dispositions that effectively reflected what children perceive to comprise happiness and success in the classroom. These entailed a range of (1) academic or learning related qualities; (2) psychological traits and dispositions; (3) an orientation to social connectedness and participation; and (4) identifying with extra-curricular areas of personal interest. These findings provide an empirical insight into the thinking and perceptions of young children, and have implications for both educational practice and research oriented towards positive educational initiatives. Perhaps future research will investigate how students' learning experiences in dialogic pedagogical contexts compared with monologic. Future research could also examine what pedagogical approaches are associated with deep learning experiences and/or surface-learning experiences including experiences in dialogic pedagogical contexts compares with more monologic contexts.

In terms of practice, these findings indicate that even very young children have quite sophisticated, multi-faceted views about themselves as learners, and about what constitutes a positive and successful experience in the classroom. Also, Lodge (2008) was reported on the benefits of engaging students in dialogue about their learning for improvements in student learning and pedagogy in the classroom. While academics and learning featured prominently in the study, it was interesting to see that process-oriented qualities (such as imagining, remembering, and concentrating) appeared alongside curriculum-based perceptions (such as mathematics or language or to write well). Moreover, the presence of 'deep' perceptions of learning that were expressed alongside 'surface'-level perceptions and not related to year level has the potential to give teachers substantial leverage in terms of enabling effective

learning processes in the classroom. Next to this, the breadth of psychological traits and personal dispositions expressed by the children in their BPLS would imply that they are both aware of, and potentially benefactors of, increased emphasis on the role that these important psychological resources can play in learning. Lastly, the children clearly valued social connectedness as a feature of a happy, successful learning self, and for an important minority, there needs to be space in the classroom for expressing extra-curricular identities as part of the learning agenda.

Research that offers insight into how young children experience happiness and success in the classroom remains a priority. The response in Figure 5, 'I wish I could get more Things Right, from a Year 3/4 child, is a poignant reminder of the importance of a deliberate and intentional focus on a broad array of factors that can inform and facilitate children's happiness and success in learning. As the research illustrates, positivity and self-efficacy experienced in a safe and supportive environment are vital to success in classrooms (Osher et al., 2008).

Lastly, there is a need for further research, particularly to consider the BPLS as a tool for garnering young children's views of happiness and success in the classroom. Most immediately, we are concerned with the potential for the BPLS to be used in the same way that the BPS is used with adults – to enhance the motivation and aspirations of young children throughout their classroom activities.

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