



## 2013 Preschool Education Programme Investigation in terms of "Positive Thinking and Well-Being"\*

### 2013 Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının “Pozitif Düşünce ve İyi Oluş” Açısından İncelenmesi

Fethi TURAN<sup>1</sup> 

1. Cyprus International University, Faculty of Education, Nicosia, North Cyprus. E-mail: fturan@ciu.edu.tr

#### Abstract

In the preschool period, brain development and the rate of establishment of synaptic connections are intense and rapid. The education to be given in this period should be based on programmes, away from coincidences. In this study, it was aimed to examine the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in terms of "Positive Thinking and Well-Being". Qualitative research model and document analysis method were used in the study and Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form was prepared based on the literature. The form includes 57 sub-items under five main items. According to the findings of the study, it was seen that the Preschool Education Programme includes the main elements of self-awareness, followed by self-actualisation, empathy, communication and interaction with the group, and communication and interaction with the society; and in terms of sub-elements, the most common elements are taking responsibility, independent thinking, being open to development and learning, having different perspectives, acting in accordance with the decisions made, making efforts in line with the goal set, recognising their emotions and being creative. In addition, it was understood that 12 sub-items in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form were included less and 12 sub-items were not included at all. In line with the results obtained, in the new curriculum development processes, the elements related to positive thinking and well-being should be taken into consideration and more gains and indicators that will support positive thinking and well-being should be included. Also, teachers should be informed and raised awareness about positive thinking and well-being. In this sense, it was seen that the content related to positive thinking and well-being was included more in the updated 2024 Preschool Programme.

**Keywords:** Preschool Education Programme, Positive Thinking, Well-Being

#### Öz

Okul öncesi dönemde beyin gelişimi ve sinaptik bağlantıların kurulma oranı yoğun ve hızlıdır. Bu dönemde verilecek eğitimin rastlantılardan uzak, programlara dayalı yürütülmesi gereklidir. Bu araştırmada; 2013 Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı'nı “Pozitif Düşünce ve İyi Oluş” açısından incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Nitel araştırma modeli ve doküman incelemesi yöntemi kullanılan çalışmada alanyazına dayalı olarak Pozitif Düşünme ve İyi Oluş Analiz Formu hazırlanmıştır. Formda beş ana öge altında 57 alt öge yer almaktadır. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı'nda en fazla kendini tanıma ögesinin sonra sırasıyla kendini gerçekleştirme, empati, grupla iletişim ve etkileşim ve toplumla iletişim ve etkileşim ana öğelerinin; alt öğeler açısından ise en çok sorumluluk alma, bağımsız düşünme, gelişim ve öğrenmeye açık olma, farklı bakış açılarına sahip olma, aldığı kararlara uygun davranma, belirlediği amaç doğrultusunda çaba gösterme, duygularını tanıma ile yaratıcı olma ögesinin yer aldığı görülmüştür. Ayrıca Programda Pozitif Düşünme ve İyi Oluş Analiz Formu'nda yer alan 12 alt ögenin az yer aldığı ve 12 alt ögenin ise hiç yer almadığı anlaşılmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlar doğrultusunda yeni program geliştirme süreçlerinde, pozitif düşünme ve iyi oluşa ilişkin öğelerin dikkate alınması ve pozitif düşünme ve iyi oluşu destekleyecek kazanım ve göstergelere daha fazla yer verilmesi. öğretmenlerin pozitif düşünme ve iyi oluş hakkında bilgilendirilerek farkındalık kazanmalarını sağlanmalıdır. Bu anlamda güncellenen 2024 yılı Okul Öncesi Programı'nda pozitif düşünme ve iyi oluş ile ilgili içeriğe daha fazla yer verildiği görülmüştür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı, Pozitif Düşünme, İyi Oluş

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## Introduction

Preschool education is a systematic educational initiative in which children's development is followed in terms of all developmental areas based on their developmental characteristics, interests and needs, individual differences and abilities in the period from birth to the age of starting primary school, supported with appropriate environments and tools and their curiosity, questioning and research aspects are revealed; the school is active together with the family (MEB, 2016). In the preschool period, the foundations of a strong brain development are also laid for the versatile development of the child. In this period when the learning rate is very high, brain development and the rate of establishment of synaptic connections are also intense and fast. In this context, environmental influences deeply affect the child's brain development and learning motivation, and the conditions for the child to realise his/her own potential and become a happy member of society emerge (MoNE, 2013). With the education given in the preschool period, children's development is shaped and the developmental characteristics they will have begin to be determined. Due to their importance, these years are defined as a critical period in terms of child development. Therefore, the quality of the education to be given to the child in these years becomes very important (Kocalar & Bay, 2020).

The scope and quality of the education the child receives in the preschool period leaves positive or negative traces on the child's future life. In these years, it is possible to ensure the child's progress in the field of emotion and thought by guiding him/her and encouraging him/her to continue his/her development in a positive direction (Poyraz & Dere, 2011). All these features make it necessary for education to be based on a programme, away from coincidences. Education programmes are comprehensive plans that include learning experiences for students through activities organised inside and outside the educational institution (Demirel, 2015).

It is possible to achieve the planned goals in educational institutions at all levels and to carry out educational initiatives effectively only if the activities are handled and carried out within the framework of programmes (Erden, 1998; Şivgin, 2005). The activities related to meeting the needs of the society and achieving the goals envisaged by educational policies (Büyükkaragöz & Çivi, 1999) are included in the education programme in a coordinated manner (Varış, 1991; Gözütok, 2020; Gürkan, 2006).

Preschool education programme is an educational document that evaluates where, how, how long and with which materials children will gain the objectives determined in accordance with the developmental levels of children, and that also foresees feedback (Hirsh, 2004). Education programmes that organise the development and education of children cover all the experiences of children at school (Güler, 2001; Tuncer, 2015). In our country, the 2013 Preschool Education Programme is still being implemented. As a natural requirement of the curriculum development process, it is inevitable to evaluate education programmes to determine the effectiveness of the programmes (Tican Başaran & Ulubey, 2018). In this sense, the Preschool Education Programme dated 09/09/2013 and numbered 132, which is being implemented in preschool education institutions, was revised and put into practice within the scope of "Increasing Quality and Access in Early Childhood Education" (MoNE, 2024).

Providing the individual and the society with the opportunity and ability to evaluate right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and presenting the achievements that will adopt this are also among the subjects of examination of education programmes. Therefore, it is expected that the institutions responsible for education policies in the country update the education programmes on the required subject. In this sense, thinking skills, which have been on the agenda increasingly in recent years, have started to take place in education programmes and sample activities have started to be included (Kamışlı, 2022).

The preschool period is important years in terms of the brain's ability to adapt to structural or physiological changes (Taştan, 2020). During these years, the brain is very sensitive to the stimuli in the environment. With the positive stimuli given to the child, synaptic connections between the nerve cells in the child's brain can reach easier and more effective learning. It is now possible to prove that every experience and similar experiences and practices related to this experience or gains affect the brain structure, that new synaptic connections are formed after the first experience, that each new experience affects these connections, and that this turns into a network as the experiences increase (Gür, 2021). Based on these findings, it can be said that the education programmes developed for preschool children should be prepared for the working principles of the brain and for the versatile development of the brain, taking into account positive thinking (Polat et al., 2021).

Positive thinking is a thinking skill that has an effective role in the development of the individual and significantly affects the quality of life. In this context, in general terms, positive thinking is to accept the positive and negative experiences encountered in life as a whole and to develop methods for a better quality life by valuing the good and beautiful aspects of life more without ignoring the negativities (Kamışlı; 2022; Seligman, 2012).

Another concept related to positive thinking is "well-being". According to Tov (2018), well-being includes everything that causes lifelong experiences and evaluations to be positive (Cited in Tunç, 2022). Seligman (2012) considers well-being within the scope of components such as experiencing positive emotions, having positive relationships and collaborations, and making life meaningful. As one of the determining concepts of positive psychology, well-being is related to a good life and the meaning of life (Yener & Çankır, 2017). Well-being, as a subject of interest in positive psychology, is the ability to feel good and to be positively functional; to cope with negative emotions and to look at life positively (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2019). Well-being is also struggling and striving for personal development. In this sense, well-being foresees the individual's awareness of his/her current potential and goals and positive interaction with the environment and cares about the achievement of the basic tasks of the period in which the individual is in (Cenkseven & Akbaş, 2007; Atan & Buluş, 2021).

As a requirement of the process of updating education programmes, it is necessary to evaluate the programmes from different perspectives in order to meet the expectations in general, to measure their impact and to identify the areas that need to be improved (Demirel, 2015). In this study, it was aimed to investigate what the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" are and how often they are included in the 2013 Preschool Education Programme and whether they support "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" education. In addition, the approach to positive thinking and well-being in the updated 2024 Preschool Education Programme was also examined.

Although there is a relatively positive development in the number of studies on "Positive Thinking and Well-being Education" in Turkey, it can be said that it has not yet reached a sufficient level. While the 2013 Preschool Education Programme, which has been used for 10 years, has been evaluated in terms of visual art activities (Kandır et al., 2017); values education (Aral & Kadan, 2018); character education (Kocalar, 2020); brain-based learning (Polat et al., 2021); 21st century skills (Koçin & Tuğluk, 2020); no evaluation of the 2013 Preschool Education Programme on "Positive Thinking and Well-Being education" was found. Therefore, it is important and necessary to examine and evaluate how "Positive Thinking and Well-Being education" is included in the 2013 Preschool Education Programme. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to the development of the preschool education programme with the dimension of positive thinking and well-being and to future programme development studies.

The aim of the study is to examine the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in terms of "Positive Thinking and Well-Being". In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What are the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" in the Preschool Education Programme in terms of the aims and basic principles of preschool education and the basic features of the programme?
2. What are the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" in the attainments and indicators of cognitive, language, social-emotional, motor development areas and self-care skills in the Preschool Education Programme?

### **Method**

In this study, the qualitative research model (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016), which allows qualitative data to be handled and analysed in detail as a whole, and the document review method were preferred. Document review, which is also known as documentary review in the literature (Karasar, 2005), involves the analysis of documents containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena to be investigated (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In the study, the currently implemented MoNE 2013 Preschool Education Programme was examined and analysed in terms of "Positive Thinking and Well-Being".

### **Data Collection Tool**

In this study, in order to carry out the content analysis through more concrete data, the literature on Positive Thinking and Well-being was reviewed and five main elements were determined. In order to make the analysis with more comprehensible data, sub-items were also determined for the five main items by adhering to the relevant literature. The researcher developed a Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form based on the main and sub-items; in order to ensure the validity of the developed analysis form, three experts were consulted about the analysis form. One of them is currently a professor in the field of child development, one is a professor in the field of preschool and one is an assistant professor in the field of special education. In line with the corrections and suggestions received from the experts, the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form was updated and made ready for application. There are five main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form developed by the researcher. These main elements are also the main elements of the *Thinking with Multidimensional Perspectives* approach discussed by Gür (2021). In this context, the first main item in the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form is related to self-recognition. The second main element is related to knowing the other person and making sense of their behaviours, and the concept of empathy is addressed within this dimension. The third main item is related to belonging to the group. In-group communication-interaction and in-group productivity are addressed within this dimension. The fourth main element is included in the dimension of social-cultural-large group belonging; cultural elements, a harmonious perspective on society and sensitivity to the needs of society are addressed in this dimension. Finally, the fifth main element is related to holistic perspective and self-realisation. Universal thinking includes plans for the individual's self-actualisation, in other words, for contributing to the environment. In order to identify the sub-elements in the context of the main elements, a more comprehensive literature review was conducted and 57 sub-elements were identified under the five main elements. Thus, the five main elements listed above and included in the analysis form were tried to be made more understandable with a total of 57 sub-elements as shown in Table 1.

### **Analysing the Data**

Two types of data analysis processes, thematic data analysis and content analysis, are recommended for document analysis (Toker, 2022). In this study, content analysis process was preferred. Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts in a set of one or more texts.

The researcher analyses the existence of these words and concepts by determining their meaning and relations. Thus, it makes inferences about the message or messages intended to be given with the text (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The work to be done with this is to analyse and interpret similar data under common concepts and themes.

**Table 1.** Main items and number of sub-items in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form

Main elements	Number of sub-items
1. Self Recognition	16 sub-items
2. Empathy	8 sub-items
3. Communication and Interaction with the Group	6 sub-items
4. Communication and Interaction with Society	8 sub-items
5. Self-actualisation	19 sub-items
<b>Total 5 main elements</b>	<b>57 sub-items</b>

In order to improve the reliability of the research, the reading, analysis and evaluation process was repeated by the researcher at two-month intervals to ensure that the research was protected from deficiencies and errors.

In accordance with the purpose of the study; 2013 Preschool Education Programme;

1. Objectives of Preschool Education (4 objectives)
2. Basic Principles of Preschool Education (18 basic principles)
3. Basic Features of Preschool Education Programme (16 Basic Features) and the statements under the titles
4. 63 outcomes and 242 indicators belonging to cognitive, language, social-emotional and motor development areas and self-care skills in the Preschool Education Programme were analysed according to the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form prepared by the researcher and developed with expert opinions. The codes in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form were subjected to content analysis, frequency values were presented in graphs, and the results obtained were discussed within the scope of the literature and inferences were made.

As mentioned above, the 2024 Programme was developed and put into practice with the aim of supporting children's healthy growth, maximising their development in cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional areas, and making them ready for primary school and life by putting their own experiences to work during the preschool education period (MoNE, 2024). In this context, the aims, basic principles and basic features of the Programme developed and put into practice, as well as the areas of *cognitive, language, physical development and health and social-emotional* development included in the Programme were briefly evaluated.

## Findings

**1. When the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-being" in terms of the aims of preschool education in the Preschool Education Programme are examined;** the aims and duties of preschool education in the Preschool Education Programme are defined in accordance with the general

aims and basic principles of national education;

1. *To ensure the development of children's body, mind and emotions and the acquisition of good habits,*

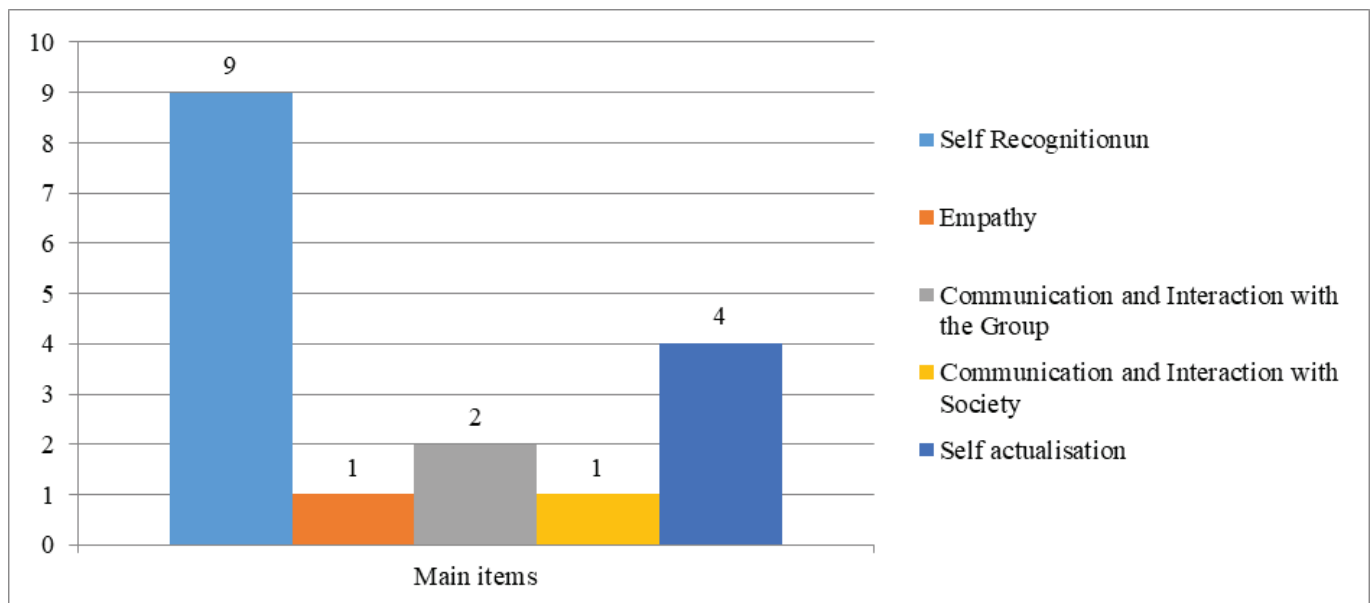
2. *Preparing them for primary school,*

3. *Creating a common upbringing environment for children from unfavourable backgrounds and families,*

4. *To enable children to speak Turkish correctly and beautifully...*" as four items. Objective items are naturally general statements. When the achievements and indicators of the curriculum are examined, it is seen that these objective items are discussed in detail within the development areas. Therefore, a separate analysis was not deemed meaningful here.

**2. When the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-being" in the curriculum are examined in terms of the basic principles of preschool education,** it is seen that 5 of the 18 basic principles in the curriculum include elements related to Positive Thinking and Well-being. The findings obtained when the basic principles in the programme are evaluated in terms of the five basic elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Table are shown in Graph 1.

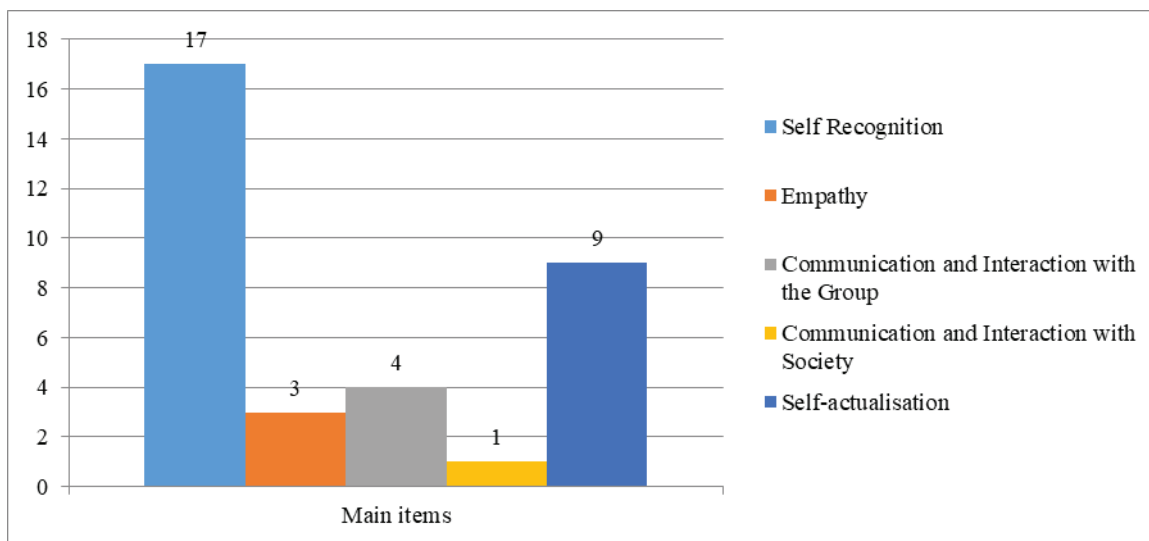
**Graphic 1.** Main Elements Related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the Programme in Terms of Basic Principles of Preschool Education



When Graph 1 is examined, it is seen that in the basic principles of preschool education, the main element of Self-recognition is mentioned 17 times in total, followed by Self-actualisation, Communication and Interaction with Group, Communication and Interaction with Community and Empathy.

**3. When the elements related to 'Positive Thinking and Well-Being' in the programme are examined in terms of the basic features of the Preschool Education Programme,** it is seen that 4 of the 16 basic features in the programme include elements related to 'Positive Thinking and Well-Being'. The findings obtained when the basic features in the programme are evaluated in terms of the five basic elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Table are shown in Graph 2.

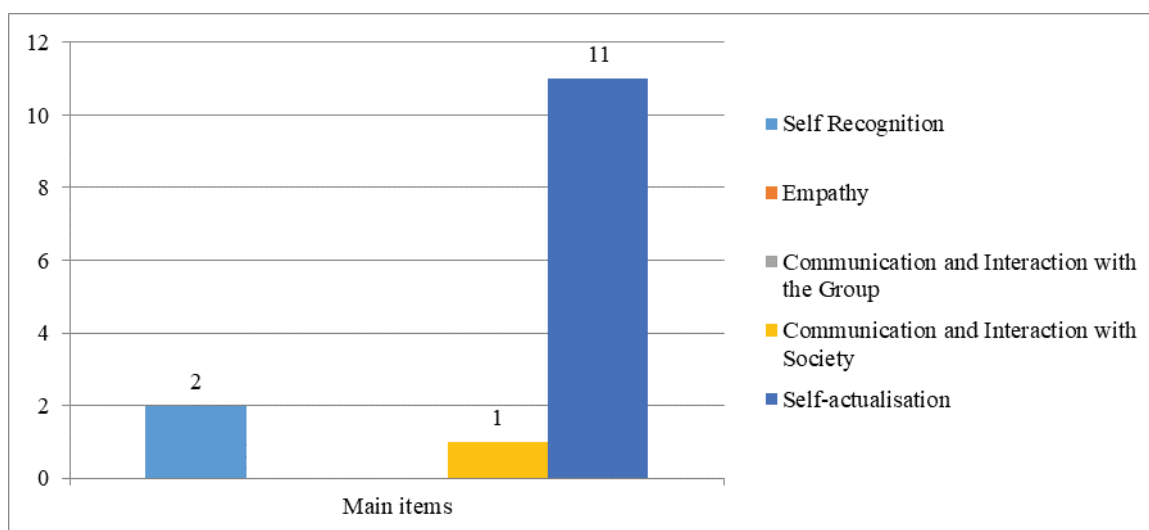
**Graphic 2.** Main elements related to Positive Thinking and Well-being in the programme in terms of Key Features of Preschool Education



When Graphic 2 is examined, it is seen that **the** main element of Self-recognition is mentioned 34 times in the main features of the Preschool Education Programme, followed by Self-actualisation, Communication and Interaction with Groups and Empathy, and the least item is Communication and Interaction with Society.

**4.1. In the examination of the elements related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the achievements and indicators of the cognitive development area in the Preschool Education Programme,** it is seen that the main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being analysis table are included 14 times. The findings obtained when the achievements and indicators of the cognitive development area are evaluated in terms of the five basic elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being analysis table are shown in Graph 3.

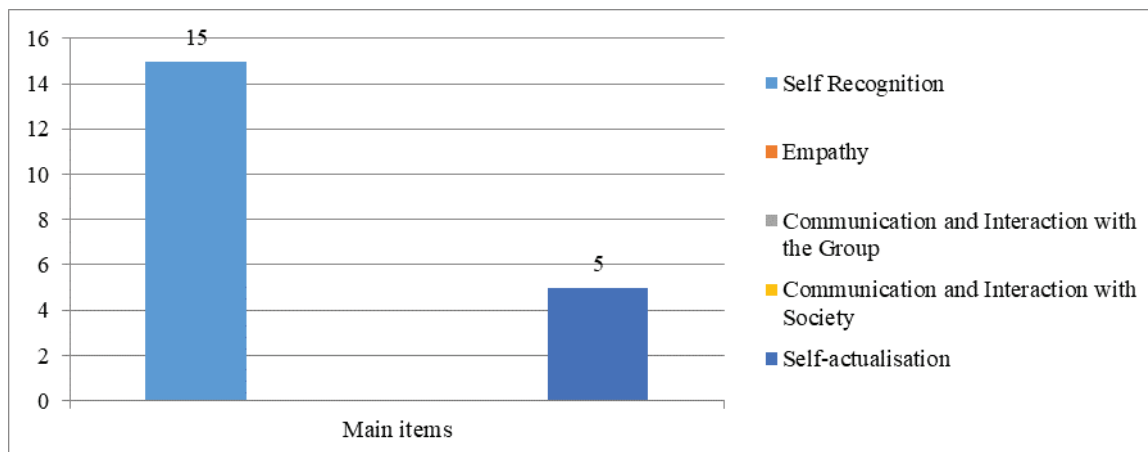
**Graph 3.** Main Elements of Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the Cognitive Outcomes in the Preschool Education Programme



When Graph 3 is analysed, it is seen that the achievements and indicators belonging to the field of cognitive development in the curriculum mostly include Self-Actualisation, followed by Self-Recognition and Communication and Interaction with Society, while Empathy and Communication and Interaction with Group are not included at all.

**4.2 In examining the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-being" in the gains and indicators of the language development area in the Preschool Education Programme;** it is seen that the main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being analysis table are included 20 times in the objectives in the language development area. The findings obtained when the language objectives in the curriculum are evaluated in terms of the five main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being analysis table are shown in Graph 4.

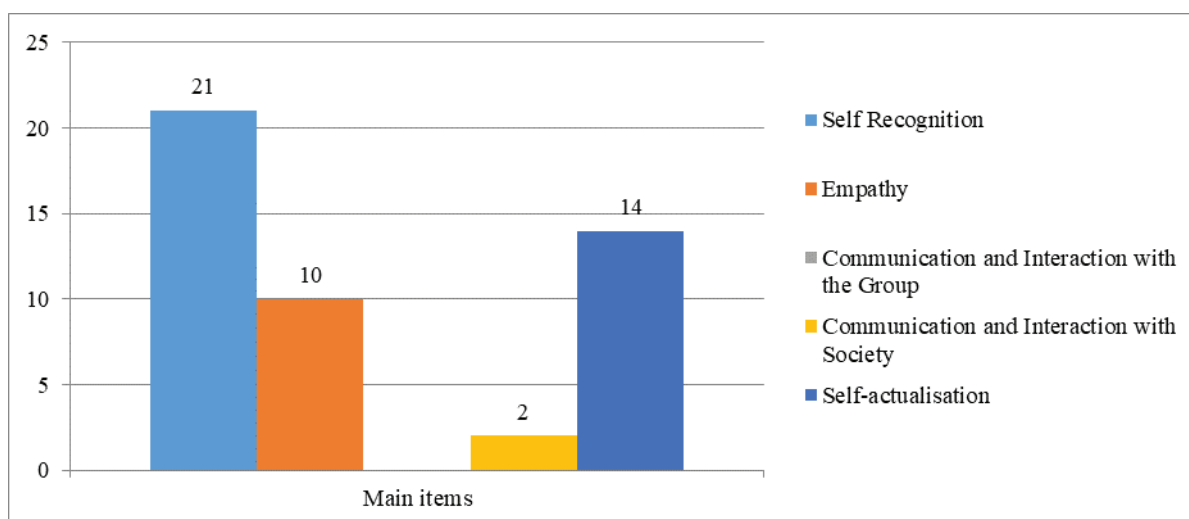
**Graph 4.** Main Elements Related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the Language Outcomes in the Preschool Education Programme



When Graph 4 is examined, it is seen that in the attainments and indicators belonging to the Language development area in the curriculum, Self-recognition is the most common item, followed by Self-actualisation, while Empathy, Communication and Interaction with Group, and Communication and Interaction with Society are not included at all.

**4.3 In the examination of the elements related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the outcomes and indicators in the field of social-emotional development in the Preschool Education Programme,** it is seen that the main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Table are included 47 times in the outcomes and indicators in the field of social-emotional development in the programme. The findings obtained when the social-emotional outcomes in the programme are evaluated in terms of the five main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Table are shown in Graph 5.

**Graph 5.** Main Elements of Social-Emotional Outcomes in the Preschool Education Programme Related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being





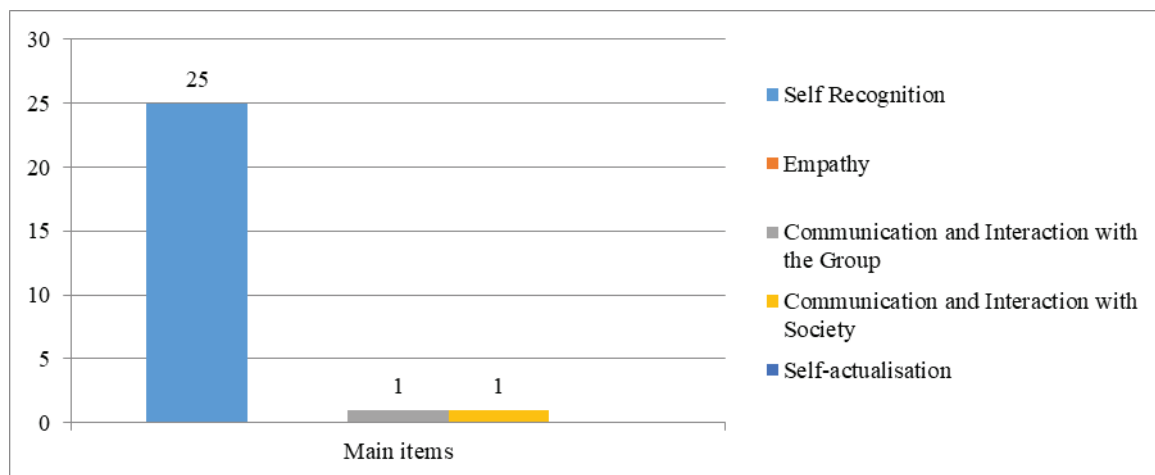
When Graph 5 is examined, it is seen that the most common element in the attainments and indicators of the social-emotional development area in the curriculum is Self-Recognition, followed by Self-Actualisation and Empathy, while the element of Communication and Interaction with Society is very rarely included, and the element of Communication and Interaction with Group is not included at all.

#### 4.4 In the examination of the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-being" in the outcomes and indicators of the motor development area in the Preschool Education Programme:

When the outcomes and indicators of the motor development area in the programme were examined, it was not found meaningful to directly associate them with the elements related to positive thinking and well-being. However, in general, as a component of healthy life, motor development is related to the child's cognitive, mental, social-emotional and psychological health as well as physical health. In this context, it can be said that achievements and indicators related to motor development provide valuable opportunities for positive thinking and well-being.

4.5 When the elements related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being in the outcomes and indicators of self-care skills in the Preschool Education Programme are examined, it is seen that the main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Table are included 27 times in the outcomes and indicators of self-care skills in the programme. The findings obtained when the outcomes of self-care skills in the programme are evaluated in terms of the five main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Table are shown in Graph 6.

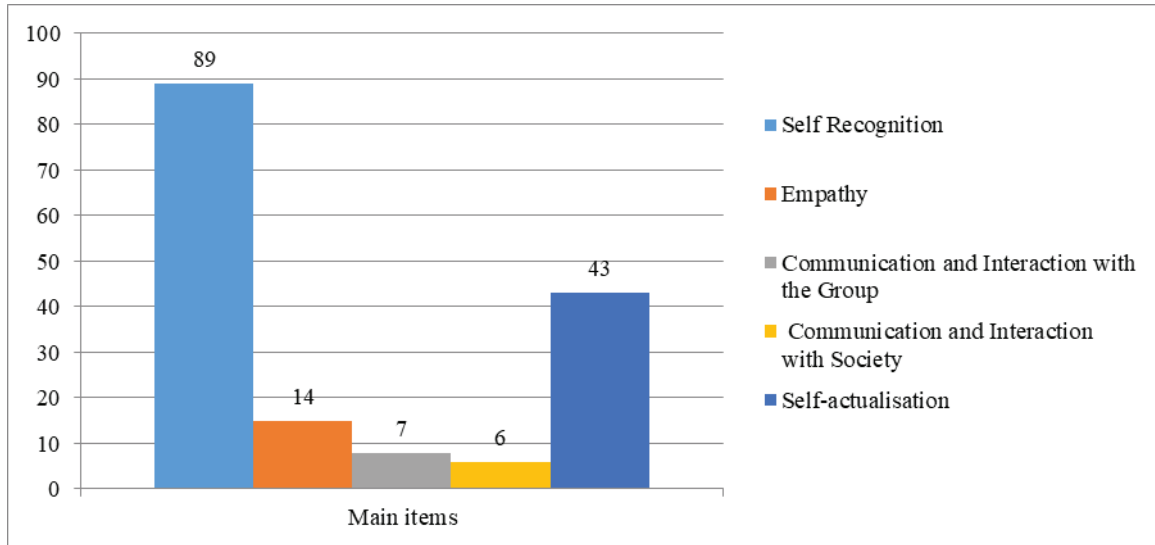
**Graph 6.** Main Elements Related to Positive Thinking and Well-Being of the Outcomes Related to Self-Care Skills in the Preschool Education Programme



When Graph 6 is analysed, it is seen that in the achievements and indicators of self-care skills in the curriculum, Self-recognition is the most common element, followed by Communication and Interaction with Group and Communication and Interaction with Society with one time each; Empathy and Self-actualisation elements are not included at all.

Looking at the Preschool Education Programme as a whole, it is seen that 5 main elements **related to Positive Thinking and Well-being** are included 159 times in the Basic Principles, Basic Features, developmental areas and self-care skills of the Programme. The general distribution of this situation is shown in Graph 7.

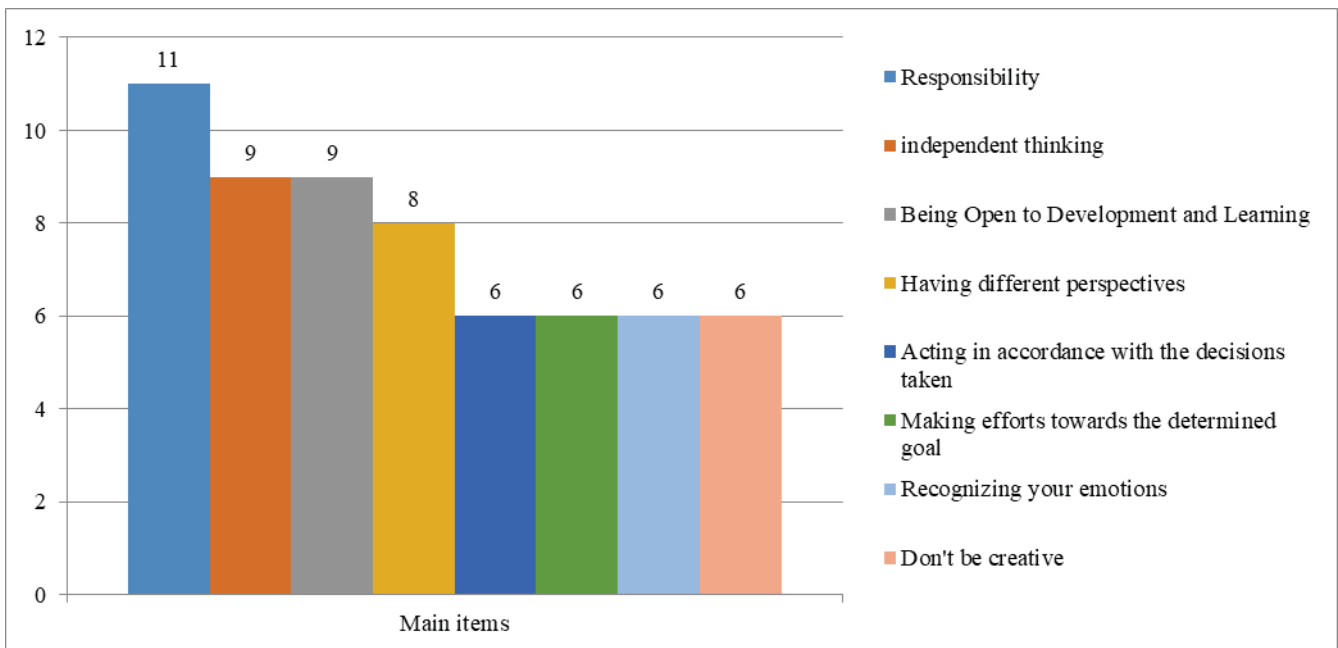
**Graphic 7.** The Inclusion of the Main Elements of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Programme



As can be seen in Graph 7, when the main elements of Positive Thinking and Well-being, which are included in the Basic Principles, Basic Features and Development Areas of the Programme and self-care skills, are examined, it is seen that the most common element is Self-Recognition, followed by Self-Actualisation, Empathy, Communication and Interaction with Group, and the least common element is Communication and Interaction with Society.

As mentioned above, the study was carried out by taking into consideration the 5 main items in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form developed by the researcher and a total of 57 sub-items within the aforementioned main items. The distribution of the findings obtained in this context according to the sub-items is shown in Graph 8.

**Graph 8.** The General Inclusion of the Sub-elements of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Programme



As can be seen in Graph 8, when we look at the 57 sub-items of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Basic Principles, Basic Characteristics, Development Areas and Self-Care Skills of the Programme, it is seen that the sub-item of taking responsibility is the most common; the second sub-items are independent thinking and being open to development and learning; these are followed by the sub-item of having different perspectives, and then these sub-items are followed by acting in accordance with the decisions made, making efforts in line with the purpose they set, recognising their emotions and being creative.

In terms of the sub-items included in the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form in the programme, the 12 sub-items that are least included in the programme are; knowing that someone else may have different feelings in the face of an event, explaining that someone else may think differently from oneself, being open to cooperation, developing friendship relations, feeling safe in a group, realising/understanding the value of living together, motivating oneself for a purpose, pursuing one's dreams, thinking critically, showing wisdom characteristics, being sensitive to environmental problems and problem solving.

In addition, the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form developed by the researcher in the Preschool Education Programme examined; Being a partner to the feelings of others, explaining the feelings of others, gaining group belonging, being sensitive to social problems, having a sense of solidarity in the community, expressing the needs of the community, expressing the needs of the community with reasons, making suggestions appropriate to the needs of the community, taking a role in line with the solution suggestions (appropriate to the level of development), having a sense of dedication, having aesthetic (beautiful) concern/aesthetic perspective, having an ethical perspective in activities and relationships.

In addition, as mentioned above, the 2024 Programme was developed and put into practice with the aim of ensuring that children who have the opportunity to receive education in pre-school education institutions grow up healthy with a wide range of learning experiences; that their development in the fields of cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development reaches the highest level, and that they are ready for primary school and life (MoNE, 2024). In this context, the 2024 Programme was examined only in its main lines and the findings obtained within the scope of the purpose of the study are given below.

1. Article 2: *"To support their adaptation to social life"* has been added to the aims of pre-school education.
2. The basic principles of preschool education have been enriched in terms of content as well as number. For example, Article 5: *"The preschool education programme is sensitive to diversity and multiculturalism. Children should be encouraged to recognise individual, social and cultural differences and to respect others."* Article 13: *"Preschool education should support children to develop a positive and realistic sense of self, to respect and trust themselves, to gain impulse control and self-control, and to feel that they have freedoms within limits."* Article 14: *"Preschool education should support children to develop a positive and realistic sense of self and others, to respect and trust themselves. Article 14: "Children should be supported to recognise their own and others' emotions, and they should be enabled to develop empathic skills and solve interpersonal problems constructively."* These principles can be associated with many main and sub-items in the "Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form" prepared within the scope of the study.
3. While explaining the basic features of pre-school education, the philosophy of the Programme was also mentioned and the statement *"Programmes that will serve to raise individuals who can solve problems, think critically and creatively, wonder, research, cooperate, empathise, have communication and prosocial skills, take responsibility, use imagination and produce, which the 21st century needs;*

*should have philosophies that adopt the principle of active learning rather than a structure that only presents information" was included and the feature "Family and community participation is important" was added independently for the first time among the features and extensive explanations were given.*

4. In the cognitive development area of the programme, the outcome *"Makes planning to reach a goal"* was added and the outcome was expressed in an observable form with indicators and teachers were guided. For example: *"Sets a goal for himself/herself, explains his/her motivation to achieve the goal, expresses the necessary steps to achieve the goal, takes action towards the goal..."*

In the new Programme, many new acquisitions have been added especially in the field of social-emotional development. For example: *"Explains the relationship between his/her emotions and behaviours, acts independently when necessary, enjoys carrying out his/her duties, tells what needs to be done to cope with emotionally challenging situations, appreciates the characteristics of others, tolerates and respects differences. Defends values related to differences, recognises others' perspectives/emotions, makes friends with peers, maintains friendships, explains the importance of friendship, helps children with different characteristics, makes helping children a habit, produces alternative solutions to interpersonal problems, acts in a compromising manner to reach a solution, shows respect for living beings, protects living beings, uses the resources necessary for sustainable life efficiently, protects the resources necessary for sustainable life, explains the rights of himself/herself and others, distinguishes between fair and unfair situations, tells the beautiful / uncomfortable situations he/she sees around him/her, organises his/her environment in different ways, values the beauties in the environment."* These added outcomes can be strongly associated with many main and sub-items in the "Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form".

5. With the 2024 Programme, the concept of "community participation" was introduced to the preschool programme for the first time along with the concept of family participation, and it was ensured that community participation was included in the activity plans along with family participation and community participation was explained with examples. This innovation is directly related to the main item "Communication and Interaction with the Community" in the "Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form".

## **Discussion**

**In the research conducted on the extent to which the five main elements of Positive Thinking and Well-Being are included in the Preschool Education Programme,** it is understood that the main element of Self-Recognition is the most included in the Programme, followed by Self-Actualisation and Empathy, and the main elements of Communication and Interaction with Group and Communication and Interaction with Society are less included. Since it was the first time in the literature to examine the Preschool Education Programme in terms of positive thinking and well-being, the discussion was based on close examinations and theoretical explanations in the literature.

The first main element in the programme in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge, which includes concepts such as self-knowledge, self-understanding or self-awareness, is the process of cognitively and emotionally realising, perceiving, feeling and experiencing one's own feelings, thoughts, beliefs and values, feedback from others. At the core of this process are the concepts of personality and self, which describe the integrity of the characteristics that shape and direct the personality, make the individual an individual, and distinguish them from others (Turan et al., 2021). How an individual can utilise his/her skills, knowledge, abilities and creativity at the highest level is within the scope of the self-knowledge dimension (Gür, 2021). The child who knows himself/herself evaluates his/her feelings, interests, values and strengths objectively and gains a sense of self-confidence. Children need a sense of self-confidence in every period of life (Sümer & Anafarta Şendağ, 2009). In

the research, self-confidence is included as a sub-item within the main element of self-recognition. Factors such as self-knowledge, positive interaction with the immediate environment, a life in harmony with society, self-realisation and life satisfaction are among the effective determinants of the well-being process (Kındıroğlu, 2018; Gür, 2021; Turan, 2002). In this case, according to the research findings, it is positive that the self-knowledge element is included in the programme the most and it shows that the programme has sufficient elements that will allow the child to know himself/herself.

The second main element identified most in the research is self-actualisation. According to Rogers, the most important source of motivation for the organism, which is a dynamic system, is the desire for self-actualisation and this motivation is sufficient to explain all human behaviours (Cited in Kuzgun, 1972). Self-actualisation, which is explained with different expressions such as the ultimate goal to be achieved, self-fulfilment, psychological well-being, autonomy, creativity and productivity, is a need for people (Maslow, 2001). In addition, self-actualisation includes the search for the completion, development and maturation of the organism (Aydın, 2008). Self-actualisation is not only a motive that directs and manages human attitudes and behaviours, but also a process that continues throughout life as a desired level of development. In this respect, self-actualisation is a key concept in the context of positive thinking and well-being. While the sense of well-being provides energy to the individual for self-actualisation, the self-actualised individual feeds the society by reflecting his/her positive energy to the group and society. In this sense, according to the results of the research, it can be said that the main element of self-actualisation is included in the programme to a considerable extent and this is a positive feature for the programme.

Empathy is one of the main elements, which ranks third in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the programme and can be counted as a few. Empathy is the emotional reaction of an individual to the conditions and feelings of another person as a result of recognising and understanding the emotional state of another person or the conditions they are in (Gökçe Ersoy & Köşger, 2016). Empathy, which is included in the field of emotional intelligence, is recognising the emotions of others and understanding the perspective of others (Goleman, 1998). Empathy is about recognising the other person and making sense of their emotional state. For this, empathic thinking is an inevitable phenomenon (Gür, 2021). Empathy skill can be developed as an important life skill by supporting it in the family and educational institutions from an early age. Parents and teachers frequently encounter opportunities to develop both cognitive and affective empathy in children in the daily flow of life. Sharing happy life experiences encountered at home, at school and even on the street, thinking about unwanted unpleasant events, and guidance in trying to understand feelings and thoughts are important for the development of empathy. In terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being, the fact that the main element of empathy ranks third and at a low level can be considered as an open area in terms of the Programme. In this context, it can be said that the Programme should include more outcomes and indicators to support empathy skills in children.

According to the findings of the research, it is seen *that* the fourth main element in the context of Positive Thinking and Well-being is communication and interaction with the group. Human beings are not created to live alone and to continue their lives without being in contact with other people. The mental and physical health of human beings is directly proportional to their solidarity with their fellow human beings and future generations. The fact that human beings cannot live without co-operation with others has made it compulsory for people in every society and culture to be in communication and interaction with their environment (Fromm, 1993). An individual's being valued in the society is directly proportional to his/her social competence and skills. Social competence is an indicator of positive interaction with the group and environment of which the person is a member (Karadağ, 2019). The most important component of interaction is communication. The importance of communication for human beings as a social being cannot be ignored and this is an acquisition that can be learnt and developed like other social skills (Yüksel, 2016). A healthy communication can make it easier for people to overcome the negative

situations they may encounter, and it also has a positive effect on the development of relationships between people. It is inevitable that people with intense positive emotions and thoughts will interact more easily with their environment and be well. In this sense, it can be said that the objectives, basic principles and characteristics, achievements and indicators to support *communication and interaction with the group* in the programme are not sufficient and should be improved.

The findings of the research show that another main element, which is ranked last in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being, is communication and interaction with the society. Positive interaction of children with their immediate environment and the group they are in facilitates the realisation of their learning goals and provides suitable environments in terms of restructuring what they have learnt and integrating it with existing cognitive structures (Yılmaz, 2001). In this sense, children's positive communication and interaction with the group increases their problem-solving skills, positive attitudes towards family/school, communication skills, self-esteem, sense of belonging, tolerant attitude towards culturally different peers, better relationships among peers, and their desire to experience new experiences (Yalçıntaş Sezgin & Ulus, 2019). According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive psychology can be analysed at three levels: subjective, individual and group. The subjective level is related to subjective experiences specific to the individual; the individual level is related to personal characteristics such as wisdom, originality, originality, forgiveness, courage, and love; and the group level is related to citizenship behaviours such as tolerance, responsibility, and helpfulness as a requirement of living together. In this sense, while positive psychology deals with the individual in different aspects, it does not neglect the relationship of the individual with the society in which he/she lives (Cited in Demir & Türk, 2020). Social-cultural institutions, facts and values in society affect the education process to which people are subjected; however, the institution that has a duty and responsibility in the education of the individual and is built to fulfil this duty is primarily education (Varış, 1991). Education deals with the individual from a broader perspective, including the social dimension, differences and the natural environment. In this respect, education is a social phenomenon. The aim of education is to influence individuals in a group and community environment in a way that is compatible and consistent with the values to which they belong, and to transfer these values to individuals deliberately. In this respect, it is a natural duty and responsibility for educators to expect the programme to be developed and strengthened. The examined programme also aimed to develop the child in terms of social-emotional dimension and included social-emotional outcomes and indicators. However, the fact that the elements of communication and interaction with the group and communication and interaction with the society related to Positive Thinking and Well-being were found at a very low level in the research findings can be evaluated as an area of the Programme open to improvement. Therefore, the Programme is expected to provide more opportunities for children to experience communication and interaction with the community in the preschool period, which is critical for development, and to guide teachers in this regard.

**In the research conducted on the extent to which the 57 sub-elements of Positive Thinking and Well-being are included in the Preschool Education Programme, it is seen that the sub-element of taking responsibility is included the most, followed by independent thinking and being open to development and learning, and then the sub-elements of having different perspectives, acting in accordance with the decisions made, making efforts in line with the goal set, recognising/being aware of their emotions and being creative are included. Since it is the first time in the literature that the Preschool Education Programme has been examined in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being, the discussion was based on close examinations and theoretical explanations in the literature.**

Taking responsibility is to assume one's own attitudes and behaviours or the consequences of any event that occurs within one's own authority (TDK, 2023). While responsibility enables the individual to take an active role in life, it also enables him/her to perform the learning activity successfully (Sezer et al.,

2017). The behaviours to be gained by children in the preschool period should also be considered as an investment in the future, in this context, the development and support of the sense of responsibility constitutes the basis for the coming years (Dereli İman, 2014). In the study conducted by Aral and Kadan (2018) in which the 2013 Preschool Education Programme was examined within the scope of values, it was found that the most common value in the Programme was responsibility. Responsibility is also included among 21st century skills in different classifications (Koçin & Tuğluk, 2020). In the study on Values Education in the Preschool Education Programme conducted by Erkuş and Yazar (2013), responsibility is among the values that should be given to children in the preschool period. It is also understood that the value of responsibility is given the most place in the studies on the Examination of the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in the Context of Values conducted by Aral and Kadan (2018) and the Evaluation of the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in Terms of Character Education conducted by Kocalar and Bay (2020). The results of the research also support this research. In this case, the programme can be evaluated positively in terms of gaining the sense of responsibility and can be said to be sufficient.

Independent thinking, Thinking, which is a natural function of the human mind, is a critical element of the process of knowing, understanding, comprehending and learning about the subject. Thinking, which begins at birth, constitutes the first step of the efforts to question, interpret and evaluate the information presented to him/her; thus, it constitutes the first step of the efforts to reveal new information and is developed directly or by environmental factors in the following years (Güneş, 2012). It is a prerequisite to have an independent thought in order to think correctly, to evaluate different opinions, to have an original idea, to criticise and criticise other thoughts (Gözütok, 2020). Individuals are expected to develop thinking skills in order to create alternative options in life experiences, make independent decisions, and act more objectively in the face of environmental influences (Özdemir, 2005; Güneş, 2012). There are no studies directly addressing independent thinking for preschool children. However, in this study, the fact that independent work is frequently included in the Preschool Education Programme can be considered as a positive situation in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being.

Openness to development and learning is the individual's readiness and willingness to increase his/her knowledge, skills and competence. An important factor in learning is the sense of curiosity. Curiosity increases the individual's interests and diversity, imagination, supports and strengthens cognitive processes. The sense of curiosity that activates intrinsic motivation motivates the child and leads to learning and development. The fact that the sub-item of being open to development and learning in the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Table in the programme is among the most common sub-items can be considered as a positive feature.

Having different perspectives is also among the sub-elements that are included in the Programme. Having different perspectives is an important feature of creativity. According to Einstein, problems cannot be solved with the same level of thinking that creates the problem (Thorpe, 2001). In other words, different thinking already prevents the problem at its source. If people knew and understood that their approaches to events and life adventures could be shaped, developed and changed, the earth would be a more livable, good and beautiful place today. It is important to explain and make children understand that there are alternative ideas and thoughts, different perspectives and what they mean, their importance and value, their perspectives and attitudes towards life when they are faced with new information and ideas, and why they need to change them in some cases. In this context, the inclusion of the sub-item of having different perspectives in terms of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Preschool Education Programme can be considered as a positive feature.

The sub-item of acting in accordance with the decisions taken is related to acting consistently without contradicting with the decisions determined by the individual's will. Decision making is the determination

of alternatives according to the preferences and values of the decision maker and making a free choice among them (Kıral, 2015). On the other hand, indecision is the dissatisfaction with the decision and the continuation of the search for changing the decision (Aygün, 2022). In this sense, the decision-making process of the individual and his/her behaviour in accordance with the decisions he/she makes is an important and positive feature in terms of his/her consistency, perseverance and determination. The fact that the sub-item of acting in accordance with the decisions made by the child in the context of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Preschool Education Programme is among the frequently encountered sub-items can be considered as a positive finding for the programme.

One of the sub-elements that is over-represented in the programme is related to making efforts for the purpose that people set. For human beings, goals add meaning to life and bind them to life. Purpose gives strength and motivates people to live and overcome the difficulties they face. In this sense, goal setting has an important place among the variables that serve the individual's positive thinking and well-being. In the words of Frankl (2009), what is really important and what people need is to strive for a goal worth striving for, a goal that is freely preferred. The result of the effort is less important, because the effort will be reciprocated and the result will come, even if late. What is important is the satisfaction, happiness, in other words, the state of well-being experienced while endeavouring on the way to the goal. As in Orhan Veli's lines, it is to be able to feel "*the bliss of doing a job in it*". In the context of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Preschool Education Programme, the fact that the element of making effort for the purpose determined by the child is among the frequently encountered sub-elements can be considered as a positive feature in terms of the Programme.

Recognising the child's emotions was also found to be among the most common sub-items in the study. Teaching children to be aware of their emotions and to manage them within reasonable limits gives them the idea that any emotion they experience is normal and this has a very relaxing effect for them. In addition, children who can learn rational ways of expressing and dealing with their emotions feel more competent, equipped, experienced and sufficient. Research shows that children who are aware of, recognise and define their emotions are more comfortable and willing to enter into social relationships, have no problems in maintaining relationships and can empathise. On the other hand, children who are made to feel guilty or embarrassed and ashamed because of their recognised emotions are limited in their ability to communicate and interact with their peers (DBE, 2022). In the context of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Preschool Education Programme, the fact that the features and achievements for children to recognise their emotions are frequently encountered can be considered as a positive feature in terms of the programme

Creativity as a process is the ability to develop new, different products and ideas. Among the prominent characteristics of creative people is the predominance of original, contrary, extraordinary, logical and critical thinking skills. At first, it was predicted that creativity was more of an inherited skill and would not change with the effect of environmental conditions; however, this perception started to change over time with the increase in studies on creativity in the 20th century and the positive results of educational programmes related to creativity. Learning that creativity can be acquired and developed has led to remarkable results. With the development of this awareness and the destruction of prejudices about creativity, the subject of creativity has found a place in the programmes of educational institutions (Sak, 2022). In the study titled Evaluation of the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in terms of Character Education conducted by Kocalar and Bay (2020), it is seen that talented and creative characteristics are included in the programme. The fact that the element of being creative is among the frequently encountered sub-elements in the context of Positive Thinking and Well-being in the Preschool Education Programme can be considered as a positive feature for the programme.

In addition, as partially mentioned in the introduction and findings sections, the Preschool Education



Programme was developed and put into practice in 2024 (MoNE, 2024). In this section, the 2024 Programme is examined only in its main lines and briefly interpreted. Examining and evaluating the 2024 Preschool Education Programme as a whole in the context of the purpose and scope of this study can and should be the subject of another study. In this sense, it is necessary to make a brief evaluation; the addition of the aim of *"Supporting their adaptation to social life"* among the aims of pre-school education is a positive development in terms of positive thinking and well-being in relation to the dimension of communication and interaction with society. Again, among the basic principles of pre-school education, it is stated that *"The pre-school education programme is sensitive to differences and multiculturalism; children should be supported to recognise individual, social and cultural differences and to respect others; pre-school education should support children to form a positive and realistic self-perception, to respect and trust themselves; children should be supported to recognise their own and others' emotions, develop empathic skills and solve interpersonal problems constructively."* These principles can be associated with many of the main and sub-elements in the "Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form" prepared within the scope of the study. Similarly, while explaining the basic features of preschool education, the statement *"Programmes that will serve to raise individuals who can solve problems, think critically and creatively, wonder, research, cooperate, empathise, have communication and prosocial skills, take responsibility, use imagination and produce, which are needed in the 21st century, should have philosophies that adopt active learning as a principle rather than a structure that only presents information"* and the addition of the feature *"Family and community participation is important"* for the first time among the features will give teachers the opportunity to organise more activities in terms of positive thinking and well-being. In terms of developmental areas and outcomes, the Programme's new outcome in the field of cognitive development *"Makes planning to reach a goal"* and the indicators *"Sets a goal for himself/herself, explains his/her motivation to achieve his/her goal, expresses the necessary stages to reach the goal, takes action towards the goal"* are also qualified to guide teachers about positive thinking and well-being. In the new curriculum, especially the social-emotional development area and new acquisitions draw attention. Especially the new acquisitions in the field of social-emotional development can be associated with many main and sub-elements in the "Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form" prepared within the scope of the study. In addition, with the 2024 Programme, the concept of "community participation" was introduced to the preschool programme for the first time along with the concept of family participation, and it was ensured that community participation was included in the activity plans along with family participation and community participation was explained with examples. This innovation is directly related to the main item "Communication and Interaction with Community" in the "Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form" and can be considered as a positive development.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this study, which aims to examine the 2013 Preschool Education Programme in terms of "Positive Thinking and Well-Being", in line with the aim; what are the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" in terms of the aims, basic principles and basic features of the programme in the Preschool Education Programme and what are the elements related to "Positive Thinking and Well-Being" in the achievements and indicators of cognitive, language, social-emotional, social-emotional, motor development areas and self-care skills in the Preschool Education Programme.

As a result of the research, in the pre-school education programme;

When the main elements of Positive Thinking and Well-being, which are included in the Basic Principles, Basic Characteristics, development areas and self-care skills of the Preschool Education Programme, were examined, it was found that *Self-Knowledge* was mentioned 89 times, followed by *Self-Actualisation* 44 times, *Empathy* 14 times, *Communication and Interaction with Group* 7 times and *Communication and Interaction with Society* 6 times.

When the Preschool Education Programme is examined based on the sub-items in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form, it is seen that taking responsibility is the most common item (11 times), followed by independent thinking and being open to development and learning (9 times), and then; having different perspectives (8 times), acting in accordance with the decisions made, making efforts in line with the purpose they set, recognising/being aware of their emotions and being creative (6 times).

It is understood that the sub-items of the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form, such as knowing that someone else may have different feelings in the face of an event, explaining that someone else may think differently from oneself, being open to cooperation, improving friendship relations, feeling safe in a group, realising/understanding the value of living together, motivating oneself for a purpose, pursuing one's dreams, thinking critically, showing wisdom traits, being sensitive to environmental problems and problem solving, are included less in the programme.

In addition, in the Preschool Education Programme, which was examined in terms of the sub-items included in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form developed by the researcher; In the Preschool Education Programme analysed in terms of the sub-items included in the Positive Thinking and Well-Being Analysis Form developed by the researcher, it is understood that 12 sub-items such as sharing the feelings of others, explaining the feelings of others, gaining group belonging, being sensitive to social problems, having a sense of solidarity in the community, expressing the needs of the community, expressing the needs of the community with reasons, making suggestions in accordance with the needs of the community, taking a role in line with the solution suggestions (appropriate to the development level), having a sense of dedication, having aesthetic (beautiful) concern/aesthetic perspective, having an ethical perspective in work and relationships are not included at all.

In addition, as a positive development in the updated and implemented Preschool Programme of 2024, it is clearly seen that the content related to positive thinking and well-being is included more in the programme.

The following suggestions can be made in line with the conclusions reached;

In order for children to closely identify the gains related to positive thinking and well-being from an early age and to associate them with their experiences, in the new curriculum development processes, more gains and indicators should be included to support the elements of Empathy, Communication and Interaction with Group and Communication and Interaction with Society, which are among the main elements in the Positive Thinking and Well-being Analysis Form, but are found to be less included in the curriculum.

When it is realised that there is a deficiency and there is a need, a learning outcome and/or indicator that is not included in the education programme can be identified and defined by the teacher and added to the education plan to be implemented. However, in such a choice, care and attention should be paid to ensure that the reasons and justifications are well and correctly determined, that the outcomes and indicators identified are consistent with the Objectives of Turkish National Education, the Objectives of Preschool Education, the basic objectives and philosophy of the programme, the objectives and characteristics of the programme, and that they do not overlap and contradict with other outcomes. In this sense, the main elements and sub-elements that are not included or not included at all in terms of positive thinking and well-being in curriculum development studies can be planned by taking into consideration by teachers.

Teachers can be informed about positive thinking and well-being to raise awareness and the updated Preschool Education Programme for 2024 can be the subject of a separate study in the context of "Positive Thinking and Well-being".

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