



PARENTS' PRESPECTIVE ON ENHANCING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROGRAMMES

**REFORMING THE SENIOR AND
JUNIOR CYCLES**

NPC Vision

The National Parents Council want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential

NPC Mission

The National Parents Council exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children’s education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children and young people.

Values

NPC knows that when parents and schools work together, children do better. Therefore, NPC believes that in order to achieve this parents must feel:

Engaged: Parents must be actively engaged in the education of their children.

Supported: Parents’ involvement in children’s education must be supported by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of all members of the school and broader education community.

Partners: Parents must be viewed as partners in facilitating children’s learning and be supported in this role by the school and broader education community.

Valued: Parents should be viewed as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and their family.

Welcomed: Parents should be welcome in the school, and their support and assistance sought as a valuable resource to support children’s education in the school.

Connected: All communication and dialogue with parents must be regular, open, two-way and meaningful.

National Parents Council

Key Activities

SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC's services are developed to empower parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

HELPLINE

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

WEBSITE

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding education at early years, primary and post primary levels.

ADVOCACY

NPC engages in awareness-raising activities and campaigning and lobbying at a national level on the objectives of its Strategic Plan.

REPRESENTING PARENTS

NPC represents the voice of parents through representation on external bodies and other mediums. NPC consults with parents and brings parents' views to bear on education policy.

BUILDING PARTICIPATION

NPC builds participation strategies and activities to ensure parents and children are an integral part of the work of NPC.



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	05
SKILLS FOR LIFE, PRIORITY LEARNING UNIT (PLU) - JUNIOR CYCLE	07
REDEVELOPMENT OF THE POST-PRIMARY SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROGRAMMES - SENIOR CYCLE	09
LEVEL (1): LOOKING AFTER MY ENVIRONMENT ELECTIVE MODULE	09
LEVEL (1): PHYSICAL EDUCATION ELECTIVE MODULE	11
LEVEL (2): DRAMA ELECTIVE MODULE	13
LEVEL (2): LITERATURE ELECTIVE MODULE	15
LEVEL (2): LOOKING AFTER MY ENVIRONMENT ELECTIVE MODULE	17
LEVEL (2): MY LIFE MY FINANCE MODULE	19
LEVEL (2): PHYSICAL EDUCATION ELECTIVE MODULE	21
SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW ELECTIVE MODULES AND IDEAS	23
FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS	24
CONCLUSION	27

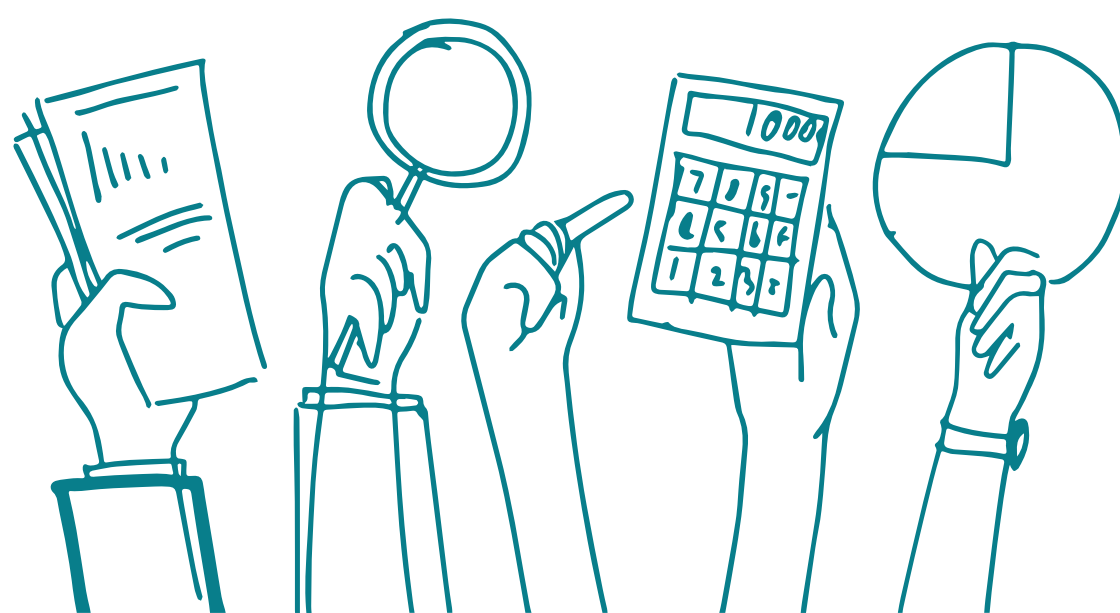
Introduction

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently reviewing the junior cycle “Preparing for Work” Priority Learning Unit (PLU) and may replace it with a “Skills for Life” PLU. This change is designed to improve the curriculum for students with general learning disabilities by focusing on important life skills. The goal is to help students become more independent and better prepared for future opportunities.

At the same time, the NCCA is creating new optional courses for senior cycle students with additional needs. For students in the Level 1 Learning Programme, the proposed subjects include Looking After My Environment and Physical Education. For students in the Level 2 Learning Programme, the new subjects include Drama, Literature, Looking After My Environment, My Life, My Finance, and Physical Education. These courses aim to help students develop personal, social, and practical skills, making them more confident and independent in daily life.

The National Parents Council (NPC) has gathered feedback from parents about these changes. This report looks at important areas, such as parents’ awareness of the changes in subject content, their understanding of the new skills being introduced, and how these updates will affect students’ learning, social life, and overall education. The feedback comes from a survey and online discussions with parents as part of the consultation process for improving both the Junior and Senior Cycle special education curriculum.

The findings presented here are based on the results of a survey and online focus groups conducted by the NPC during February 2025. The survey was sent to all parents on the NPC mailing list who had consented to receiving such invitations, and an invitation to the online focus groups was sent to those who answered the survey. The survey was open from 13 February 2025 to 20 February 2025. During this time, a total of 76 people completed the survey. The online focus group was held on 24 February 2025. The opinions of all parents who took part in the survey and the online focus group will be shared in this report.



Surveys

There were two separate surveys, one focusing on the Redevelopment of the Post-Primary Special Educational Needs Programmes - Senior Cycle and the other on Skills for Life, Priority Learning Unit (PLU) - Junior Cycle. Each survey contained several questions to assess how well the modules meet the special educational needs of children.

The surveys included a mix of multiple-choice questions and open-ended responses, allowing parents to select relevant options and provide additional feedback. Parents were also asked to reflect on how well the proposed subjects align with their child's learning needs. The findings from these surveys, including key insights and parental perspectives, will be presented in this report.

Focus Group

On 24 February 2025, a small online focus group with 3 parents was held to gather some in-depth insight on the redevelopment of post-primary special educational needs programmes—specifically, the Senior Cycle and the Skills for Life Priority Learning Unit (PLU) at the Junior Cycle level.

NPC opened the session by outlining the purpose of the focus groups and surveys, emphasising their role in improving the effectiveness of special educational needs programmes.

A key part of the session included a presentation of NPC survey results from 76 parents, revealing mixed opinions on the redevelopment of the new curriculum.

During the discussion, parents in the focus groups were asked a series of questions to provide deeper insight into their experiences and perspectives on their children's special educational needs in schools. The questions focused on:

- Feedback on Presentation Findings.
- Curriculum Improvement Suggestions.
- General Comments and observations on the suggested curriculum.

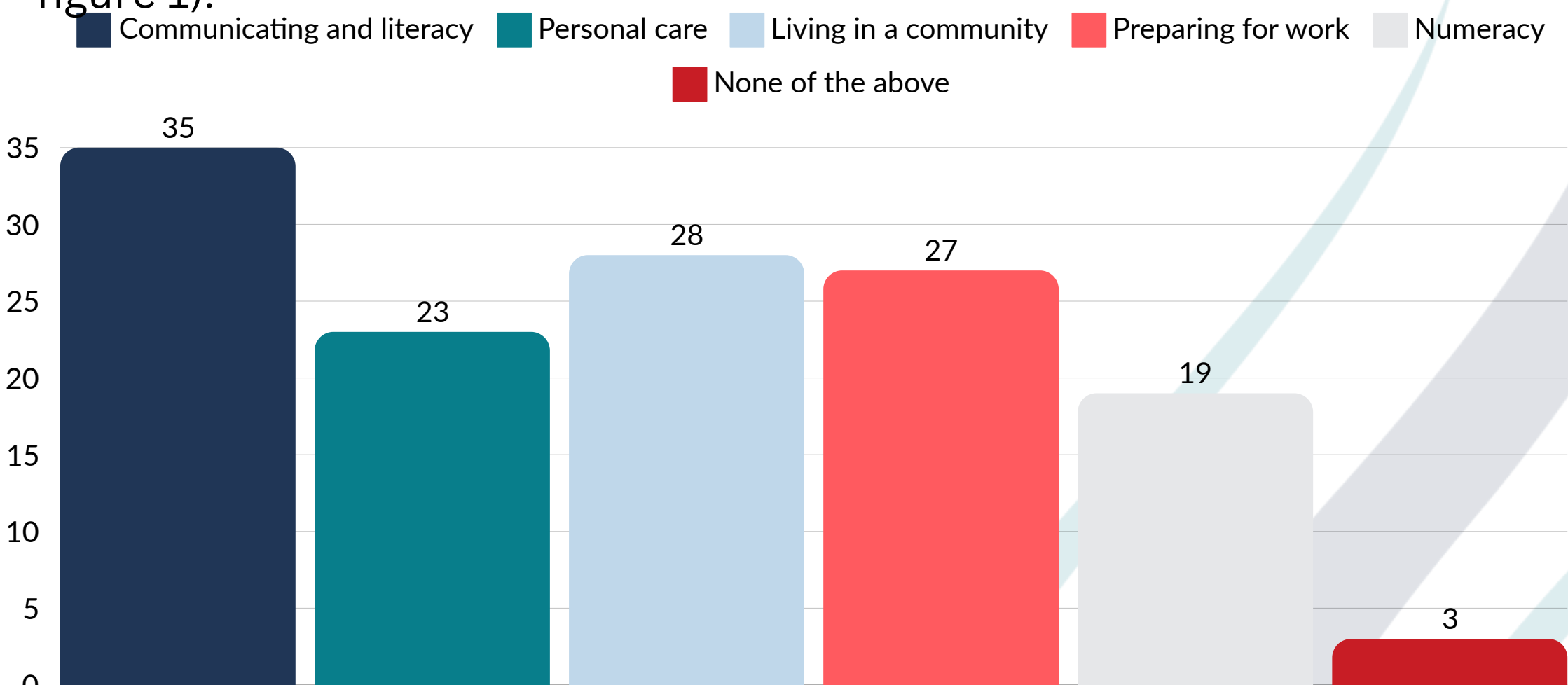


Survey Findings



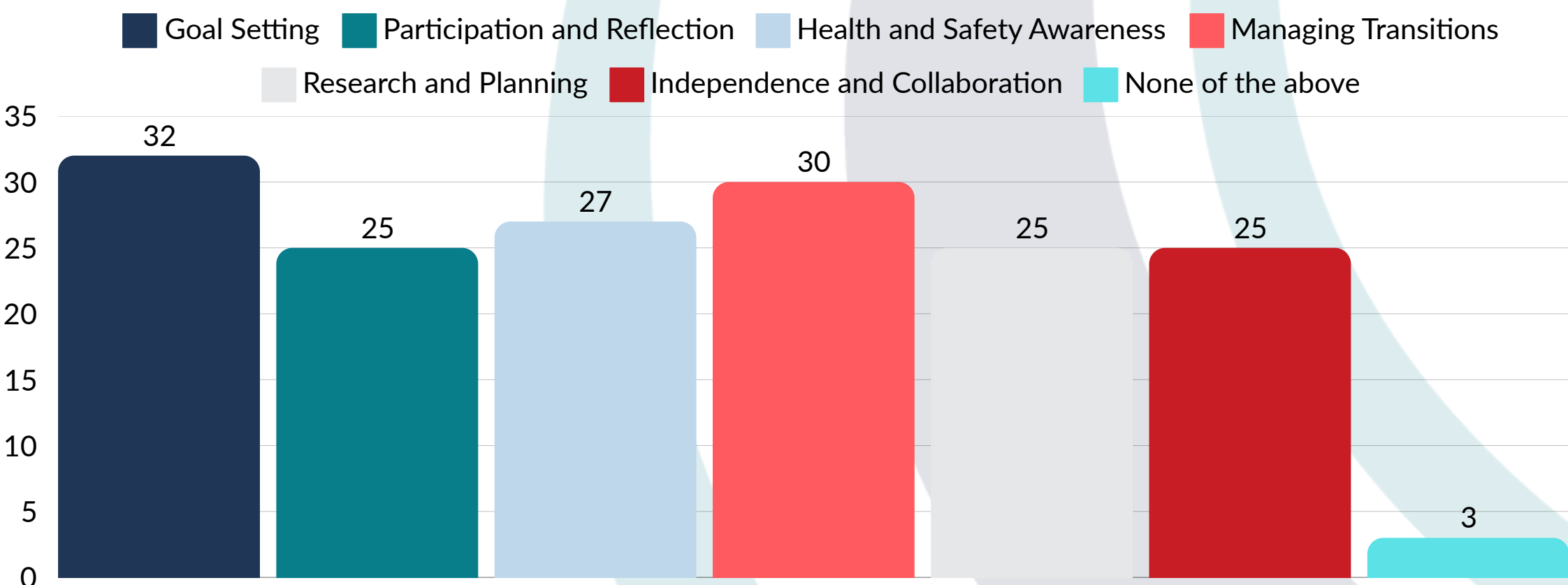
Skills For Life, Priority Learning Unit (PLU) - Junior Cycle

When asked about how the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs in the “Skills for Life” PLUs, parents were given the opportunity to choose more than one option. Just over a quarter of parents (26%) selected communication and literacy. This was followed by (21%) who selected living in a community, (20%) selected preparing for work, and (17%) selected personal care as being relevant to their child’s needs. A smaller number of parents selected numeracy (14%), while the lowest proportion (2%) indicated that none of the listed abilities applied to their child's needs (see figure 1).



(Figure 1)
In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs in the Skills For Life PLU

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for the Draft Skills for Life Priority Learning Unit. Parents were asked which of these would be most relevant to their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (19%) identified goal setting as the most relevant. A slightly smaller number selected managing transitions (18%), health and safety awareness (16%), participation and reflection (15%), research and planning (15%), and independence and collaboration (15%) as important. Only a few parents (2%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see Figure2).

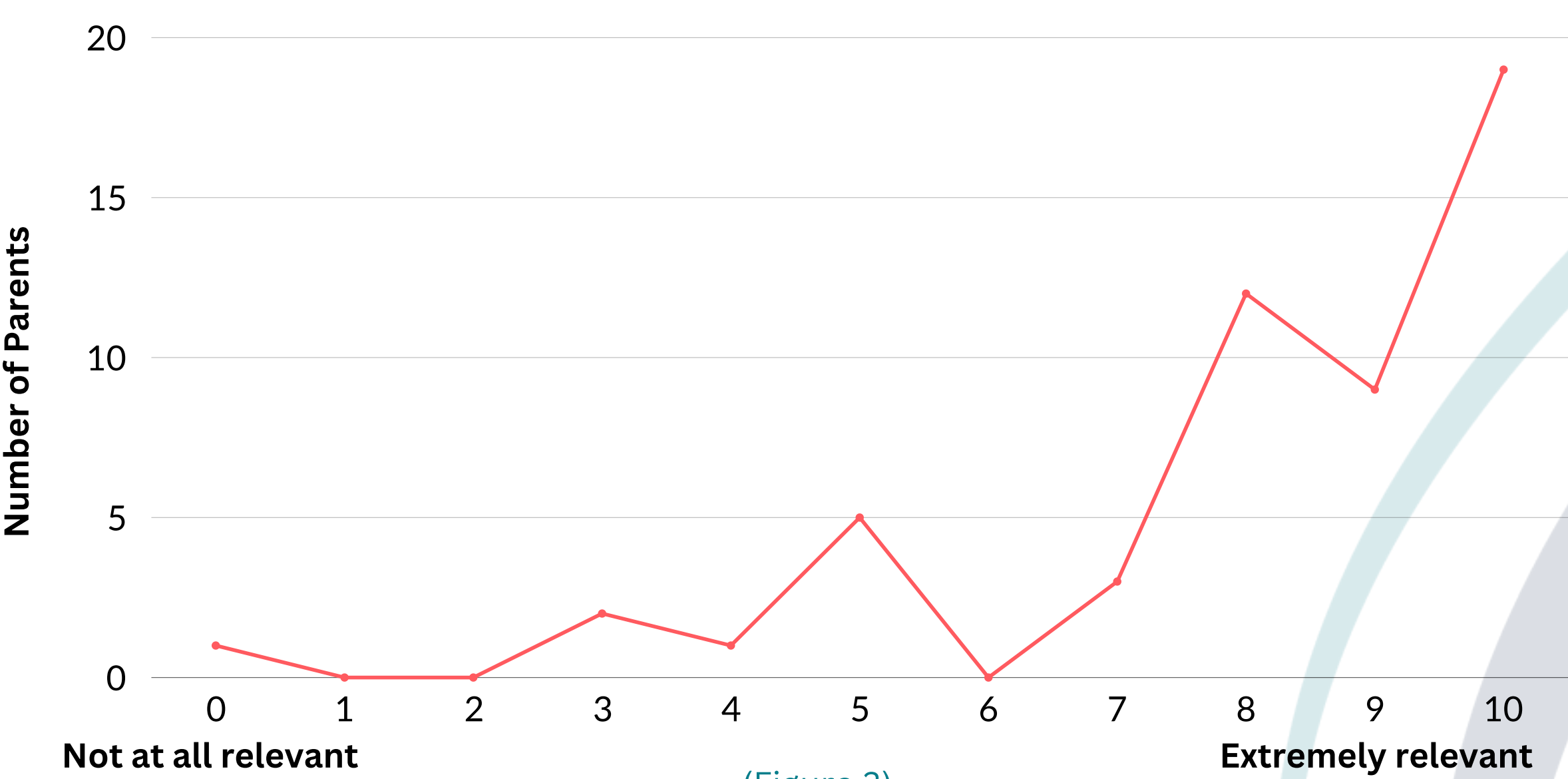


(Figure 2)
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for the Draft Skills For Life Priority Learning Unit. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

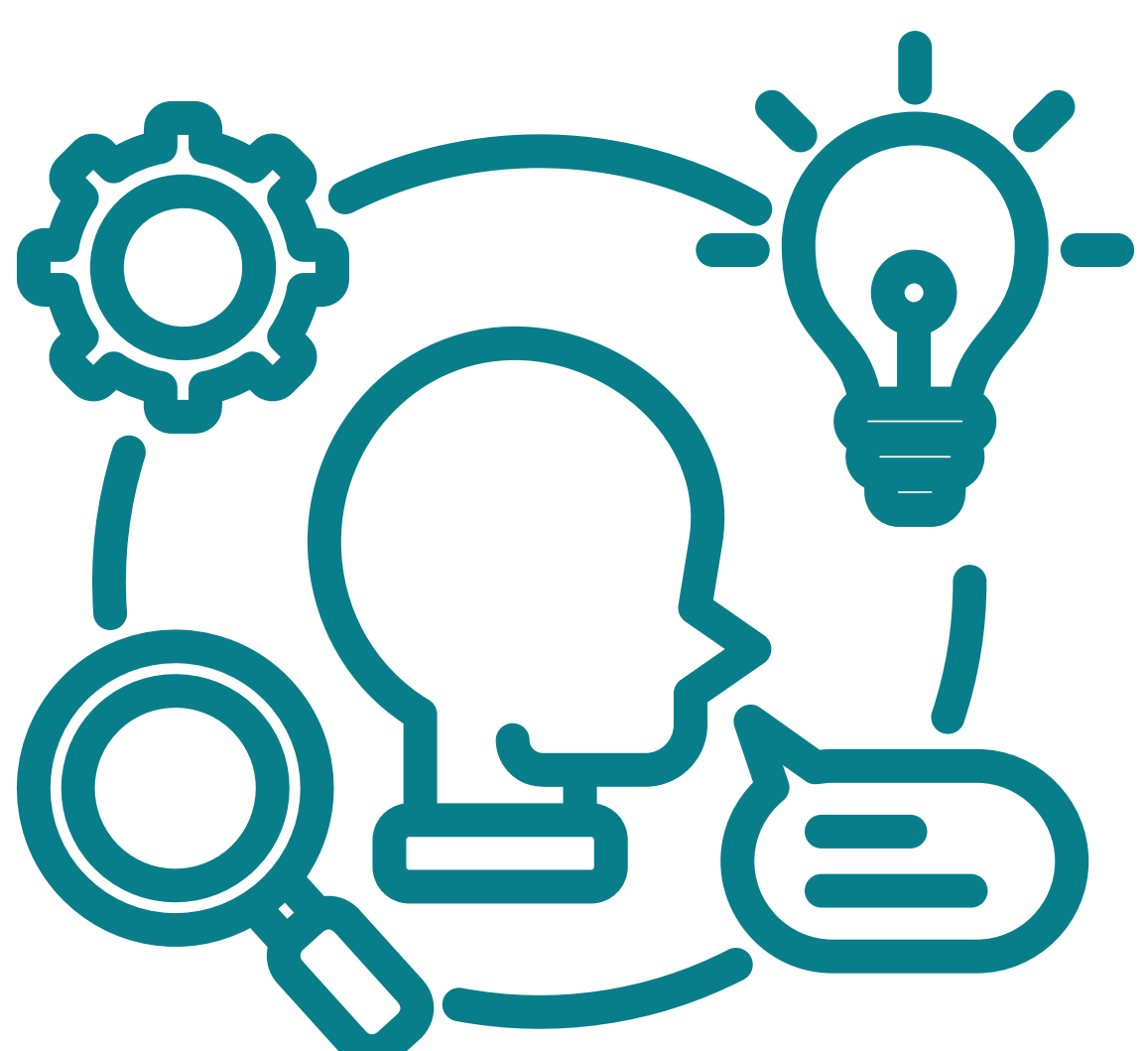
When parents were asked why they feel the NCCA’s Draft Skills for Life Priority Learning Unit does not meet their children's needs, they gave several reasons. Some said it was not relevant to their child’s situation, others mentioned that their child has a significant disability and struggles with basic tasks.

Some parents felt the programme does not support academically gifted children with anxiety, who need to be challenged in terms of their learning but cannot manage a mainstream classroom. Others believed the learning should be more practical and hands-on, rather than just listening to lessons. Some also questioned whether personal care includes learning how to manage a household, as they felt this should be part of the programme.

When asked about the relevance of the Skills for Life Priority Learning Unit to their child's individual needs, most parents (82%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A smaller number (12%) provided a moderate rating of between 4 and 6, suggesting that while some aspects of the unit may be beneficial, it does not fully align with their child's needs. A small number of parents (6%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating little or no relevance (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)
To what extent will the Skills for Life Priority Learning Unit will be relevant for your child's individual needs?

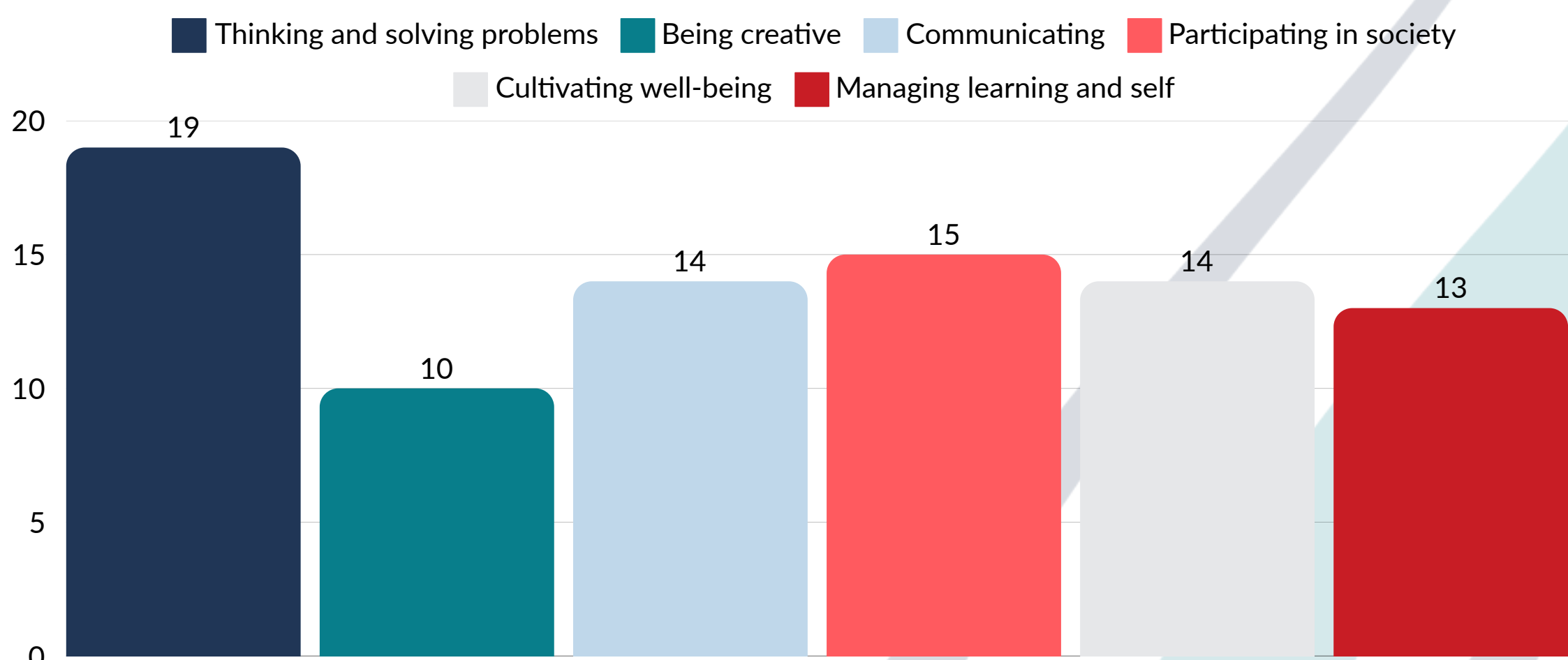


Redevelopment of the Post-Primary Special Educational Needs Programmes - Senior Cycle

Level (1): Looking after My Environment Elective Module



When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in my environment elective module, parents were given the opportunity to choose more than one option. Almost a quarter of parents (22%) selected thinking and solving problems as the most relevant. Slightly smaller numbers identified participating in society (18%), communicating (16%), cultivating well-being (16%), and managing learning and self (15%) as important. A smaller number of parents (13%) indicated that being creative would be relevant to their child's needs (see figure 4).

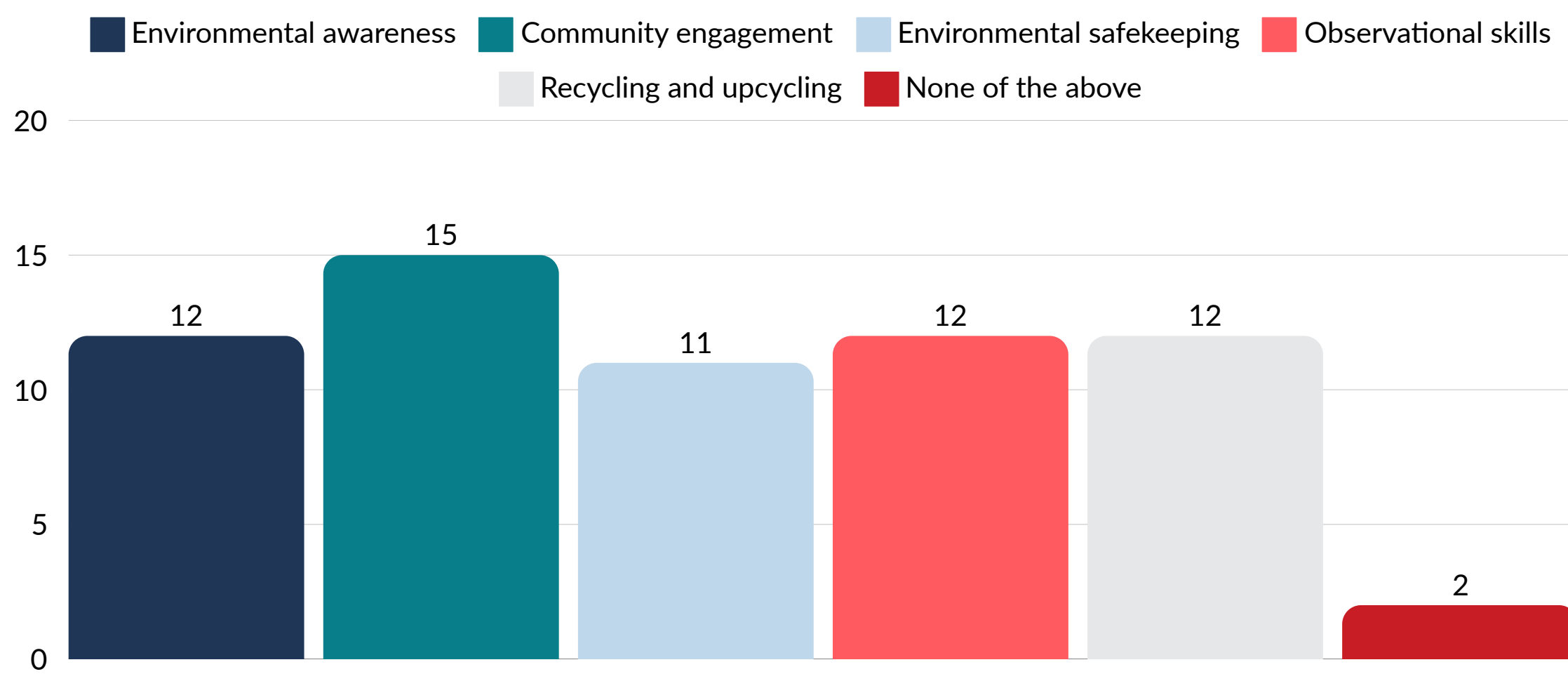


(Figure 4)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "My Environment Elective Module"?

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Almost a quarter of parents (23%) selected community engagement as the most relevant. Slightly smaller numbers identified environmental awareness (18%), observational skills (18%), and recycling and upcycling (18%) as important, while a similar proportion (17%) highlighted environmental safekeeping. Only a few parents (3%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs, and (3%) selected "other" (see figure 5).





(Figure 5)

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

When asked why the NCCA's draft learning outcomes for the "My Environment" Elective Module do not meet their child's needs, one parent responded that their child's time would be better spent learning self-care skills and appropriate public behaviour, as their child has a severe intellectual disability.

Parents were asked how relevant the "My Environment" Elective Module was to their child's individual needs. The majority (58%) found it highly relevant, rating it between 7 and 10. A smaller group (19%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that while some aspects were beneficial, the elective did not fully meet their child's needs. Less than a quarter (23%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating little or no relevance (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

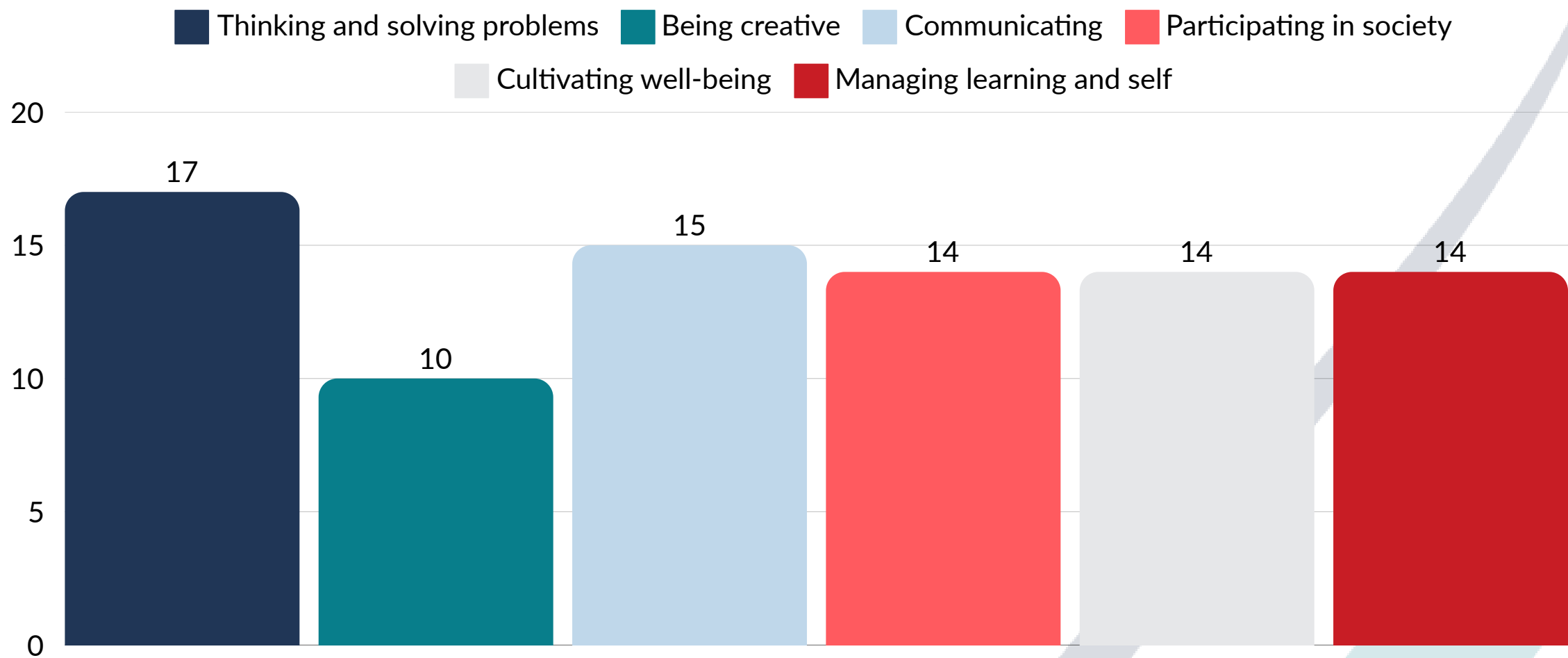
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (1): Physical Education Elective Module

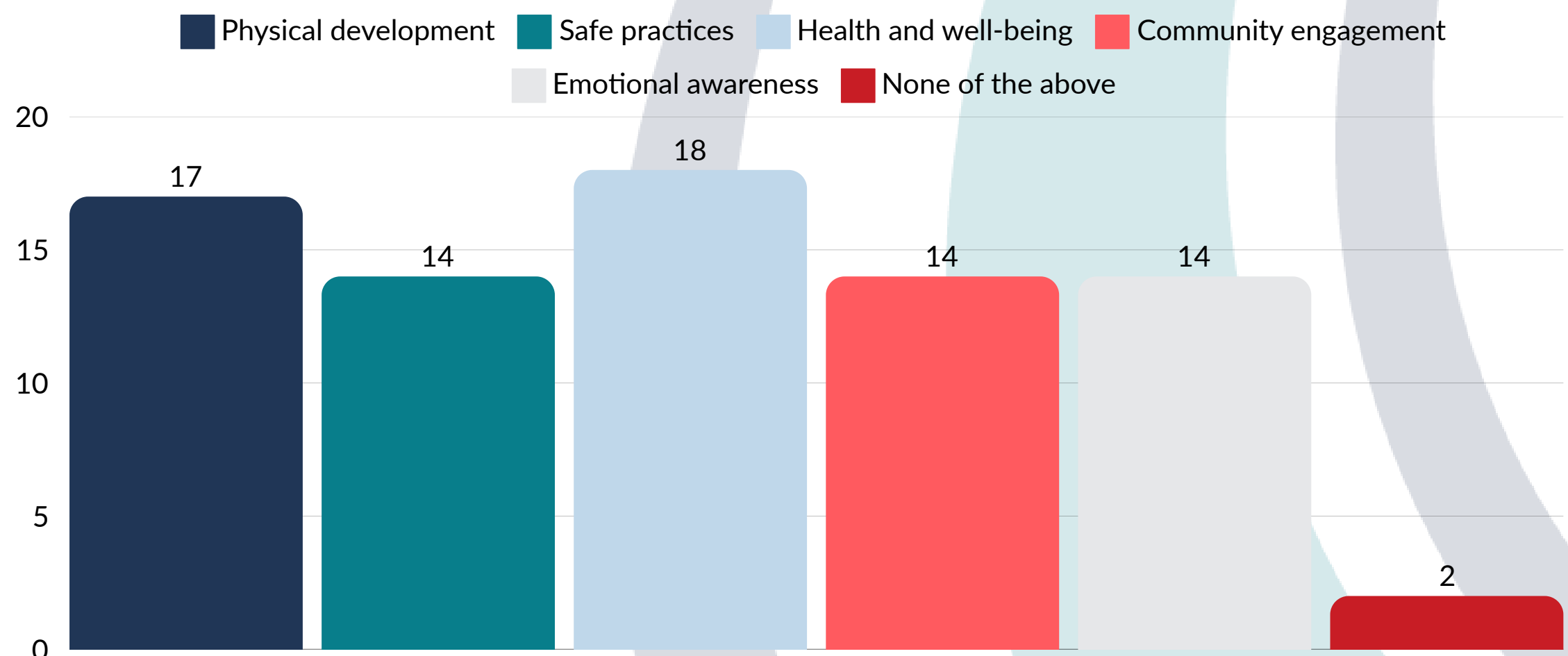


When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the physical education elective module, less than a quarter of parents (20%) selected thinking and solving problems as the most relevant. A smaller proportion identified communicating (18%), participating in society (17%), cultivating well-being (17%), and managing learning and self (17%) as important. Only a few parents (11%) indicated that being creative applied to their child's needs (see figure7).

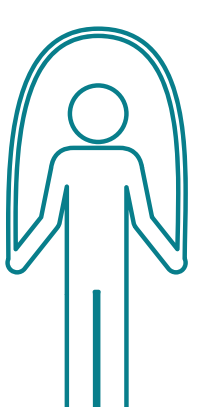


(Figure 7)
In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "Physical Education Elective Module"?

When asked which categories of the physical education elective module's learning outcomes would be relevant for their child's needs, less than a quarter of parents (23%) selected health and well-being as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified physical development (21%), community engagement (18%), safe practices (18%), and emotional awareness (18%) as important. Only a few parents (2%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see figure 8).

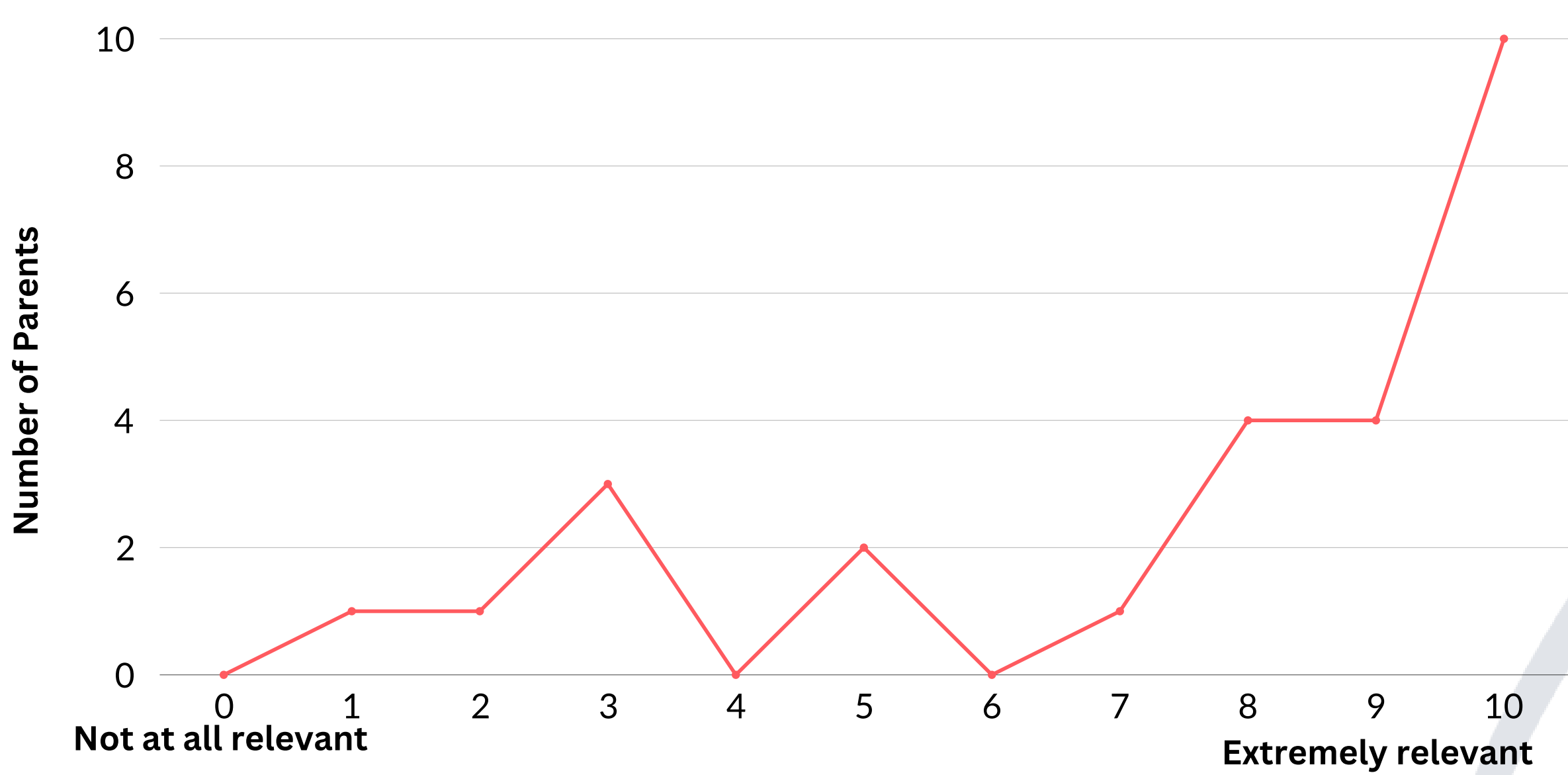


(Figure 8)
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?



When asked why the NCCA’s draft learning outcomes for the Physical Education Elective Module do not meet their child's needs, two parents responded. One parent emphasised that literacy and maths should take priority over physical education. The other parent highlighted the importance of including aquatic and swimming activities in the module to better support their child's development.

Parents were asked how relevant this elective was to their child's individual needs. The majority (73%) rated it highly, between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A smaller proportion (19%) rated it between 0 and 3, suggesting little or no relevance. Only a small group (8%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, indicating that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs (see Figure 9).



(Figure 9)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (2): Drama Elective Module



When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the drama elective module, less than a quarter of parents (22%) selected being creative as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified communicating (18%), participating in society (17%), thinking and solving problems (16%), and cultivating well-being (15%) as important. Only a few parents (12%) indicated that managing learning and self, applied to their child's needs (see figure 10).

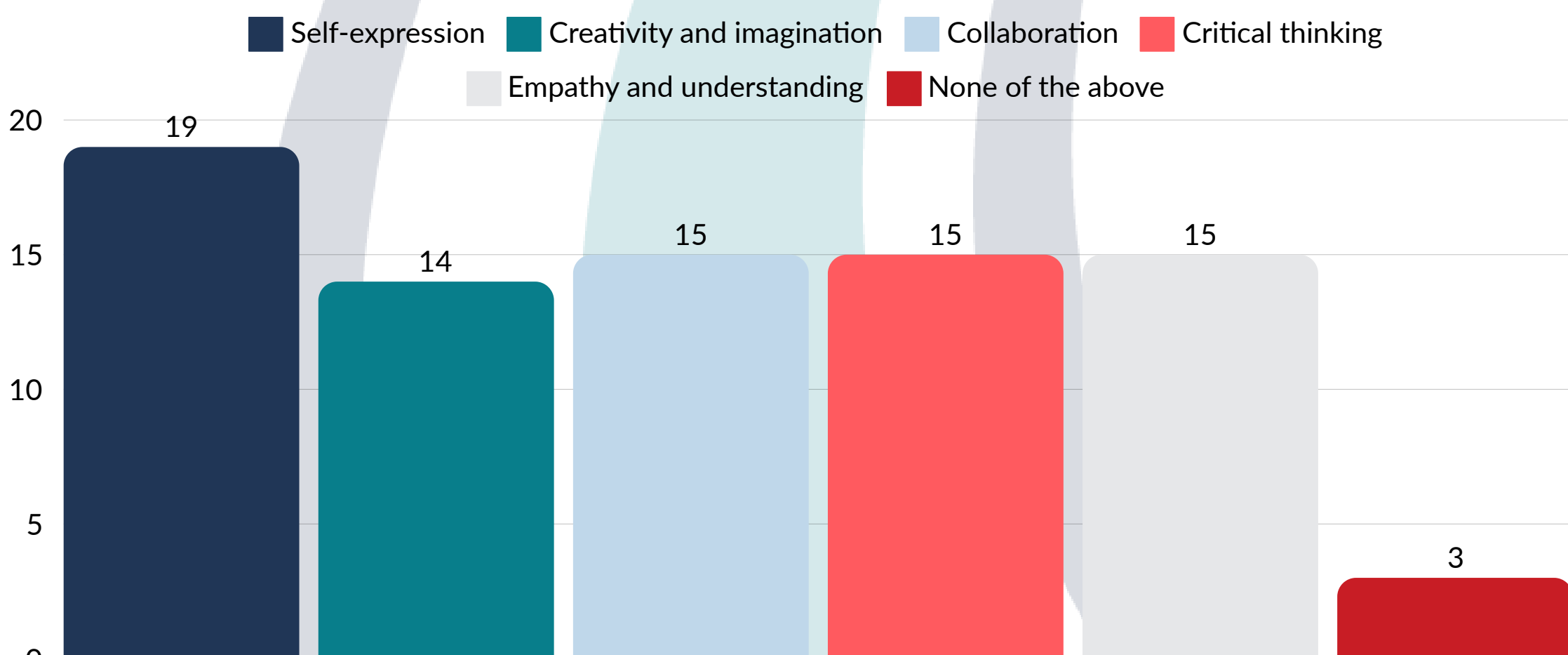


(Figure 10)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "Drama Elective Module"?



The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these categories would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (23%) selected self- expression as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified collaboration (19%), critical thinking (19%), and empathy and understanding (19%) as important. Additionally, (17%) of parents highlighted creativity and imagination. Only a few parents (3%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see figure11).

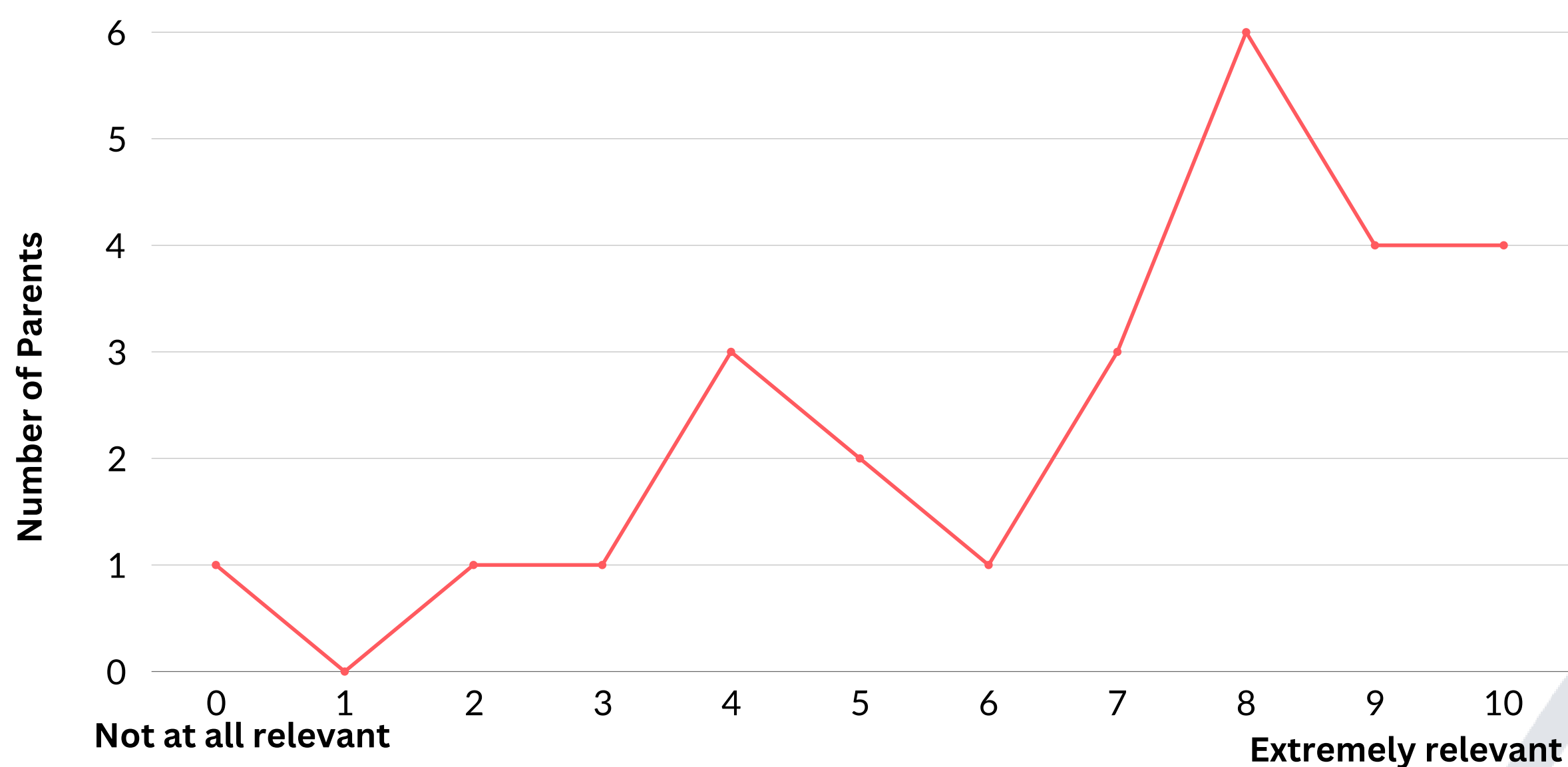


(Figure 11)

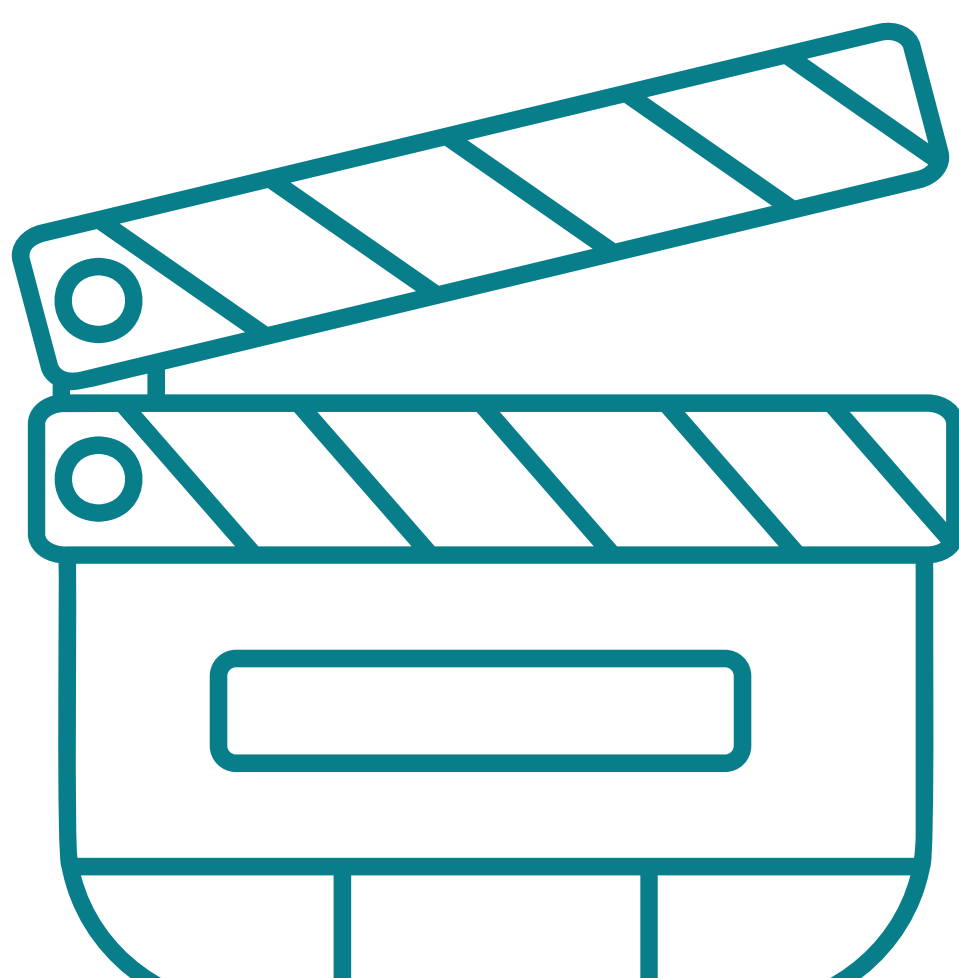
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

When asked why the NCCA’s draft learning outcomes for this module did not meet their child's needs, one parent responded that it was not relevant.

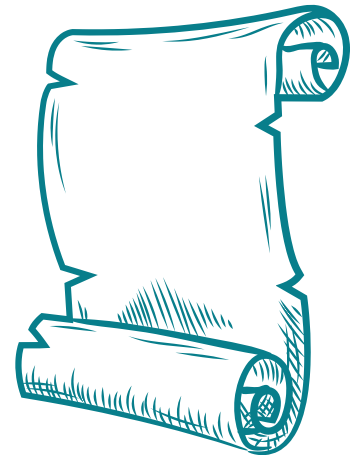
Parents were asked to what extent this elective would be relevant to their child's individual needs. The majority of parents (65%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A smaller number of parents (23%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs. A few parents (12%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating that they found the elective to be of little or no relevance (see Figure 12).



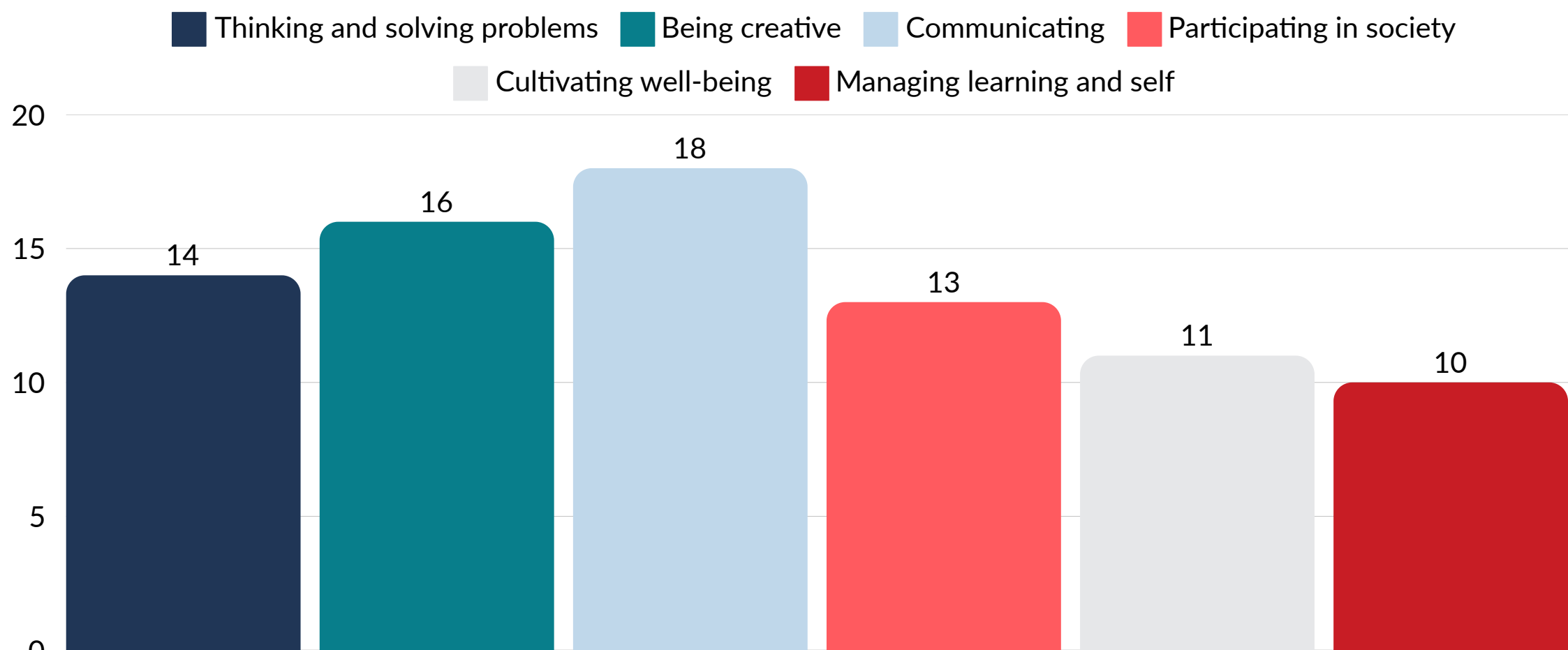
(Figure 12)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (2): Literature Elective Module



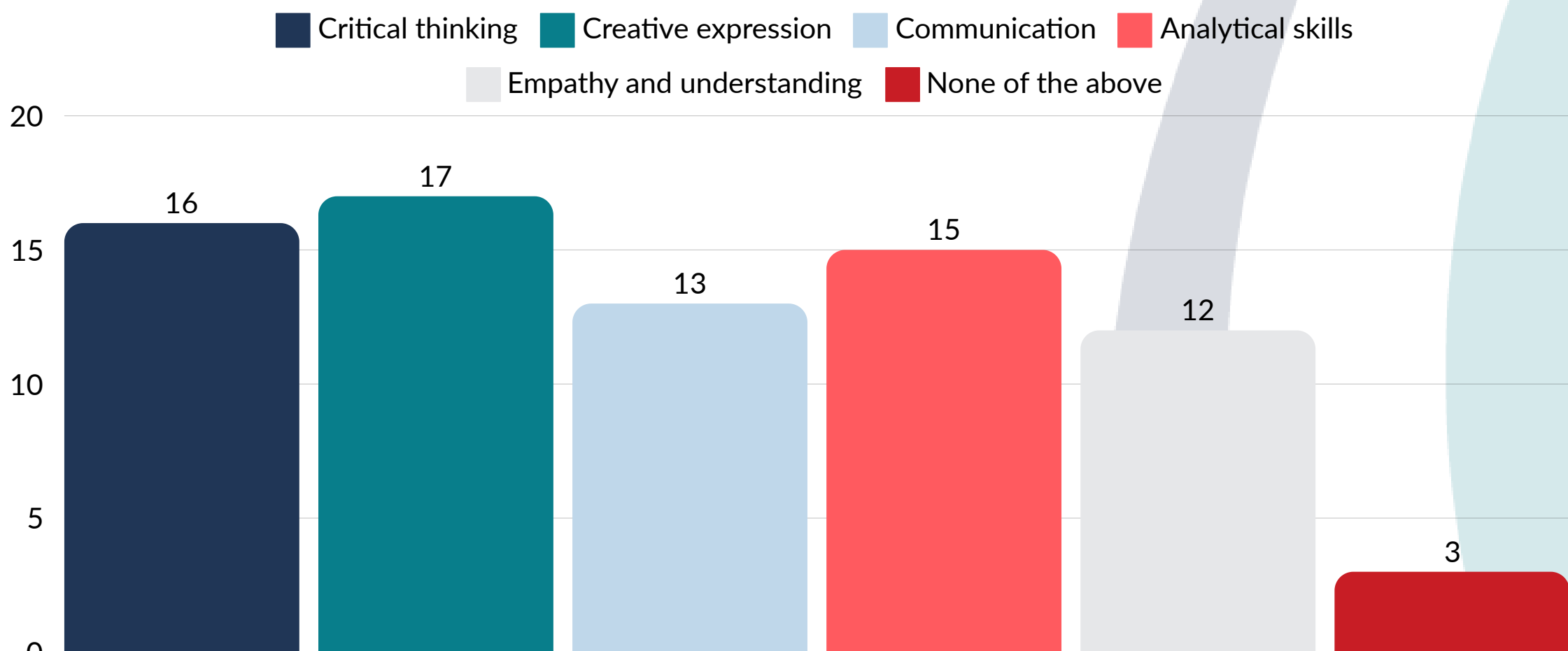
When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the "literature elective module," less than a quarter of parents (22%) selected communicating as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified being creative (20%), thinking and solving problems (17%), and participating in society (16%) as important. Only a few parents indicated that cultivating well-being (13%) and managing learning and self (12%) applied to their child's needs (see figure13).



(Figure 13)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "Literature Elective Module"?

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these categories would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (22%) selected creative expression as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified critical thinking (21%), analytical skills (20%), communication (17%), and empathy and understanding (16%) as important. Only a few parents (4%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see Figure 14).

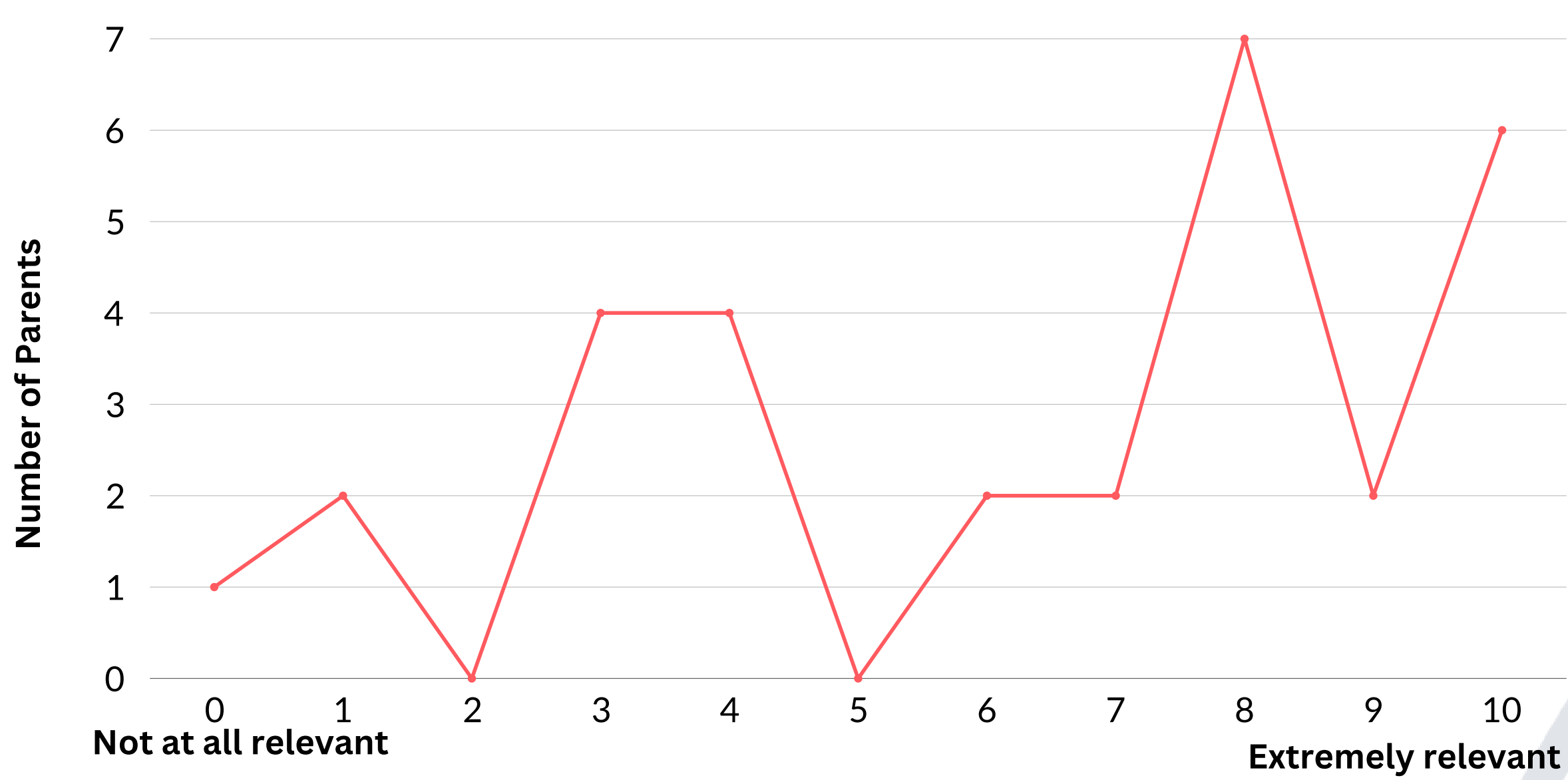


(Figure 14)

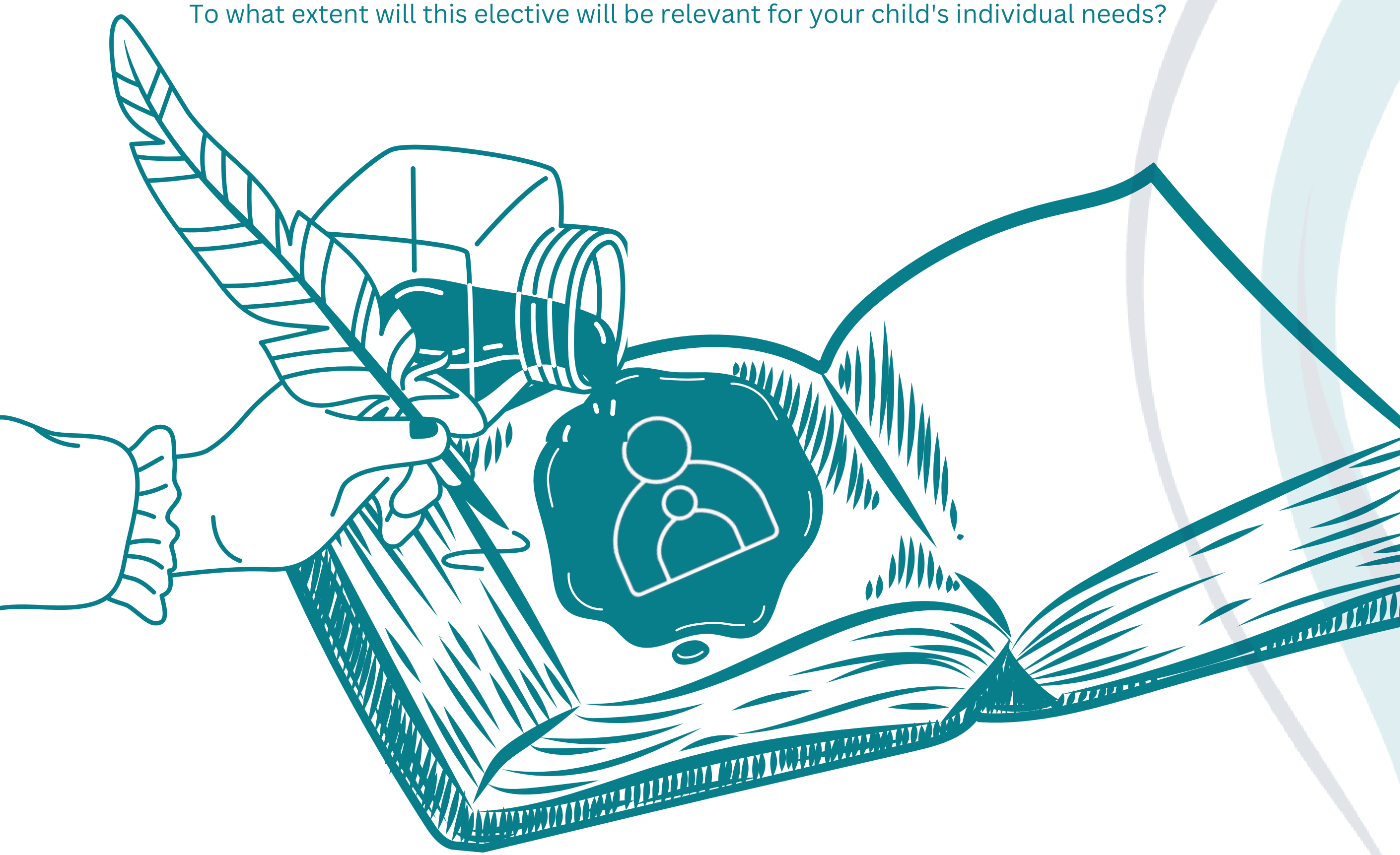
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

When asked why the NCCA’s draft learning outcomes for this module did not meet their child's needs, one parent expressed concerns regarding the overall relevance of the current module. In contrast, another parent suggested that reading should be incorporated into the literature module.

Parents were asked to what extent this elective would be relevant to their child's individual needs. The majority of parents (65%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A significant minority (27%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating that they found the elective to be of little or no relevance. Only a few parents (8%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs (see Figure15).



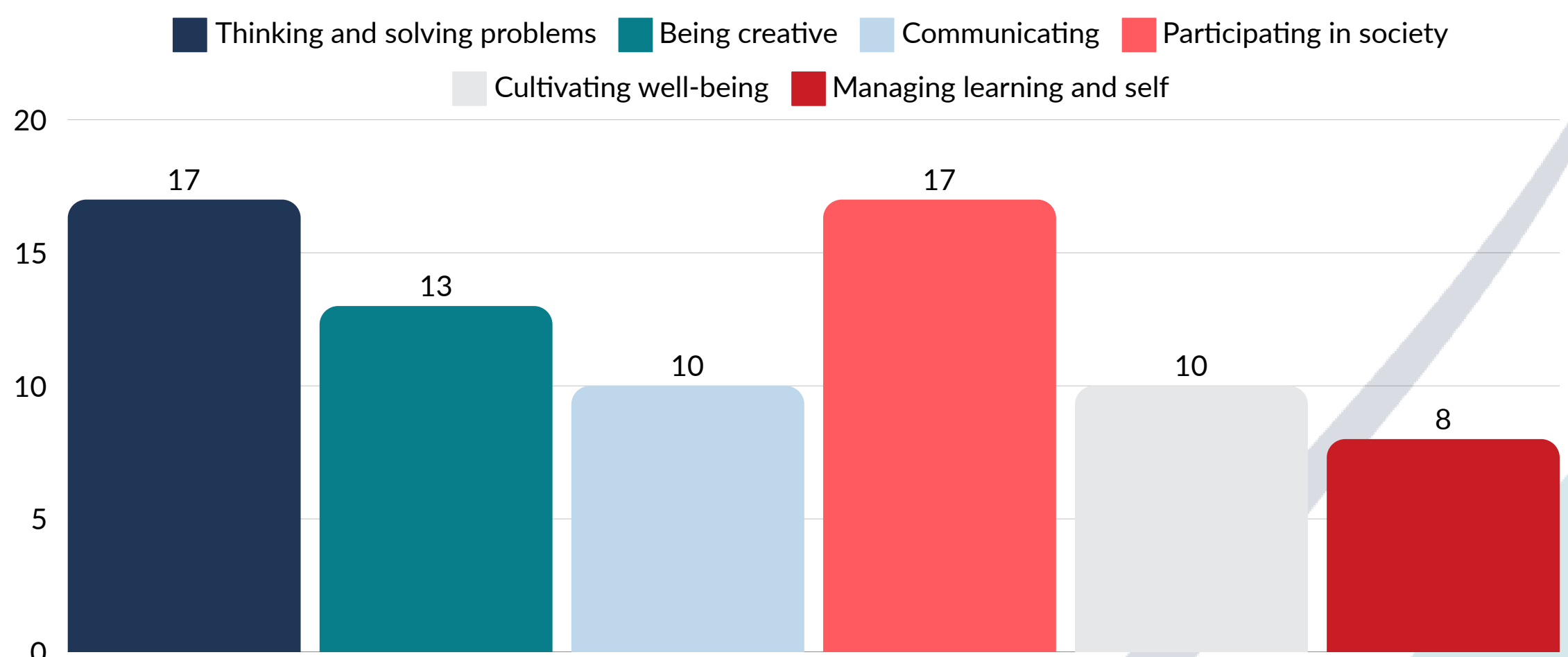
(Figure 15)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (2): Looking after My Environment Elective Module



When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the "looking after my environment" elective module, less than a quarter of parents selected thinking and solving problems (23%) and participating in society (23%) as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents (17%) identified being creative as important, while only a few parents indicated that communicating (13%), cultivating well-being (13%), and managing learning and self (11%) applied to their child's needs (see figure 16).

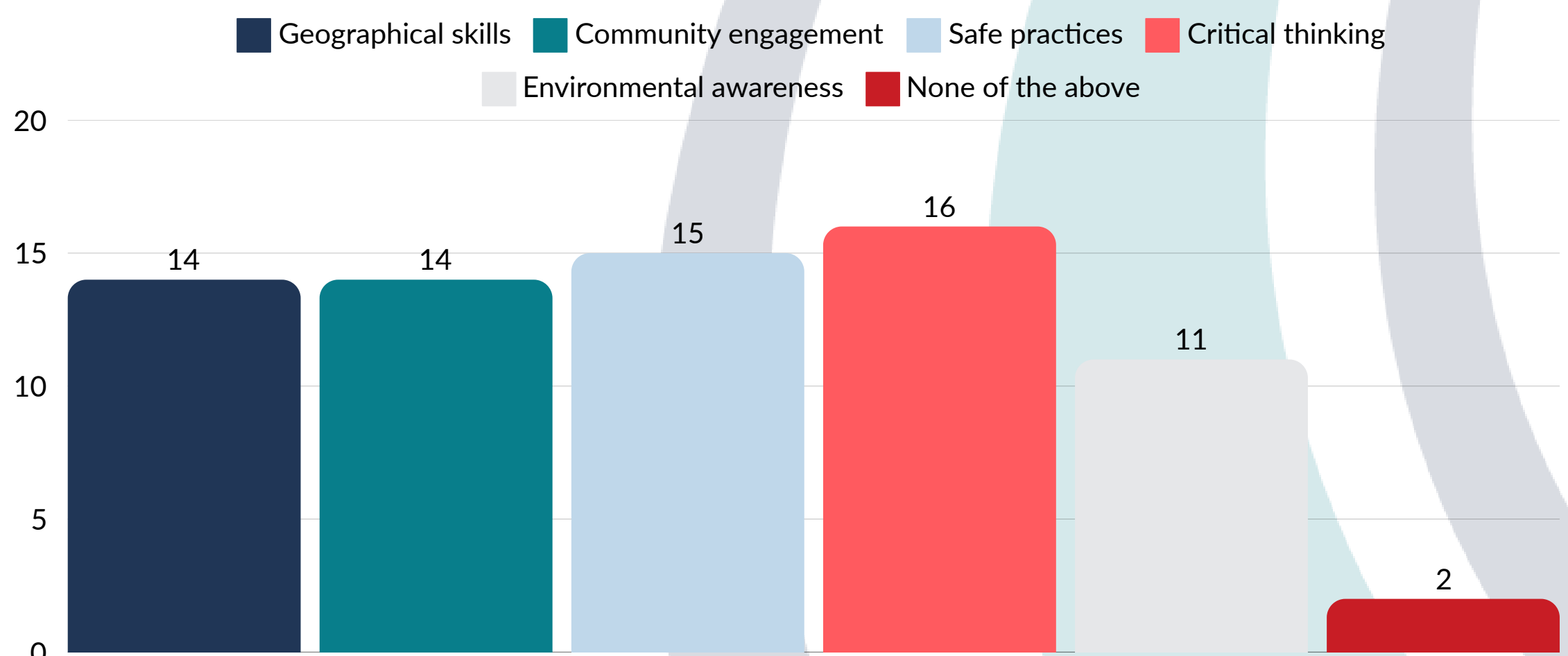


(Figure 16)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "Looking After My Environment Elective Module"?



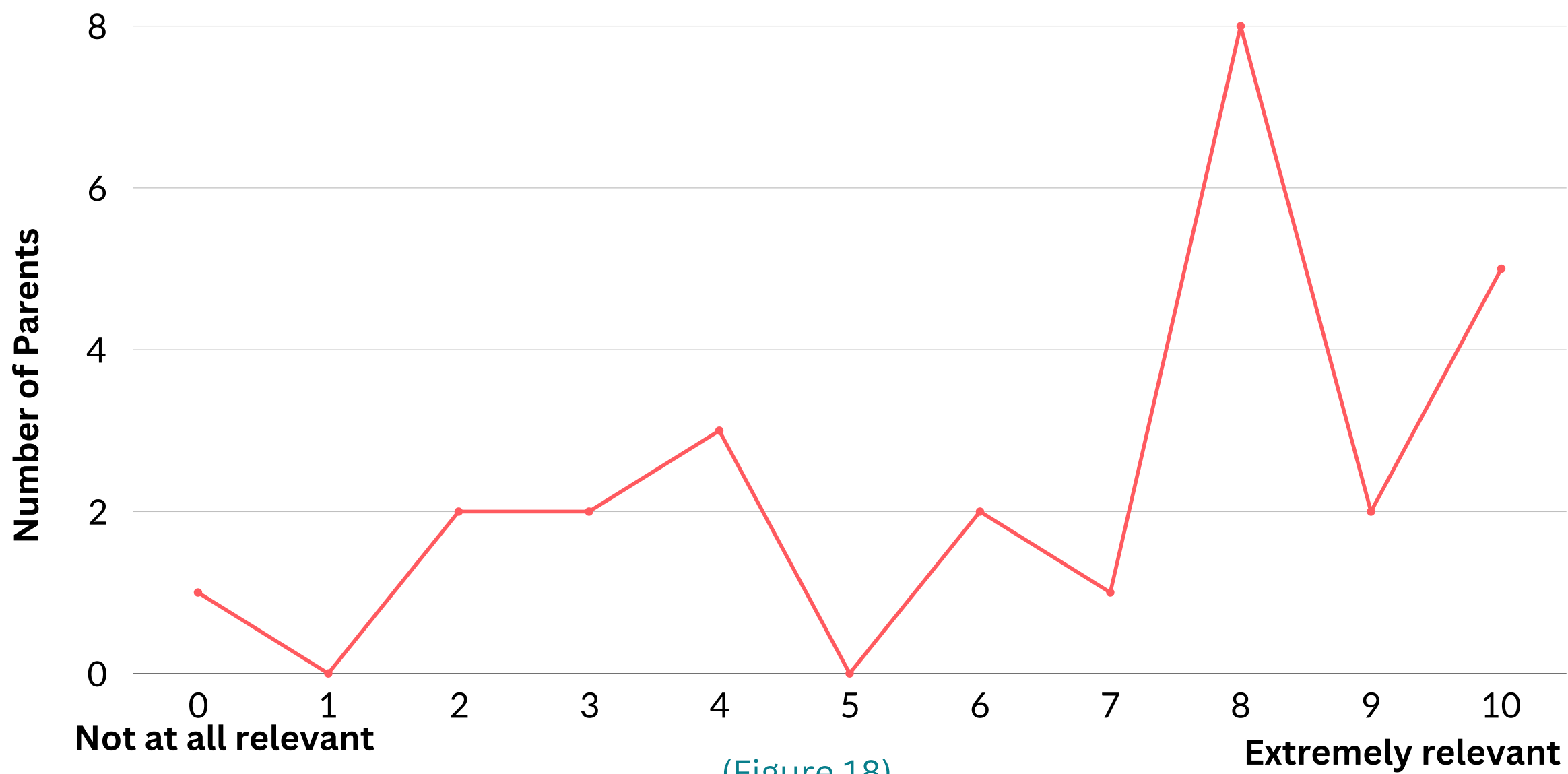
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these categories would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (22%) selected critical thinking as the most relevant. A smaller number of people identified safe practices (21%), community engagement (19%), and geographical skills (19%) as important. Only a few parents (15%) highlighted environmental awareness, while (4%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see figure 17).



(Figure 17)

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

Parents were asked to what extent this elective would be relevant to their child's individual needs. The majority of parents (62%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A smaller proportion (19%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating that they found the elective to be of little or no relevance. A further (19%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs (see Figure18).



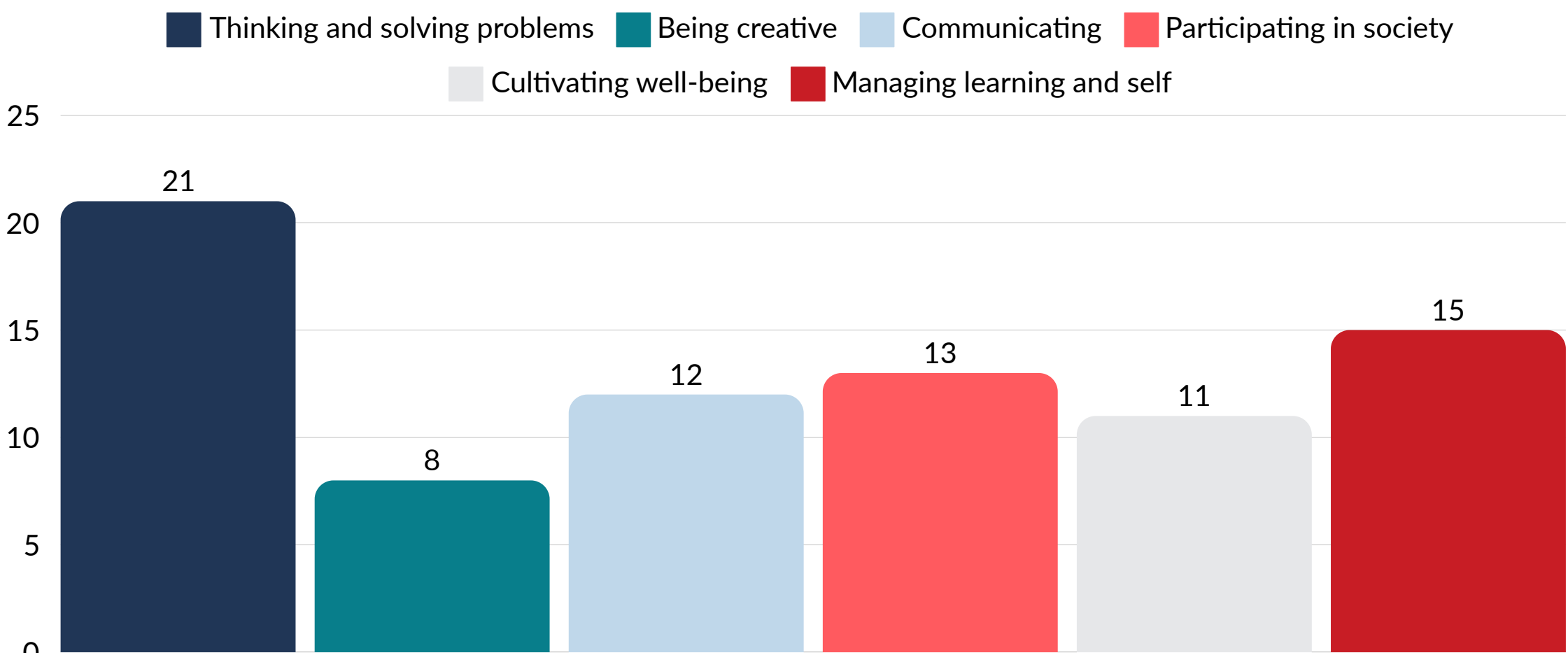
(Figure 18)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (2): My Life My Finance Module



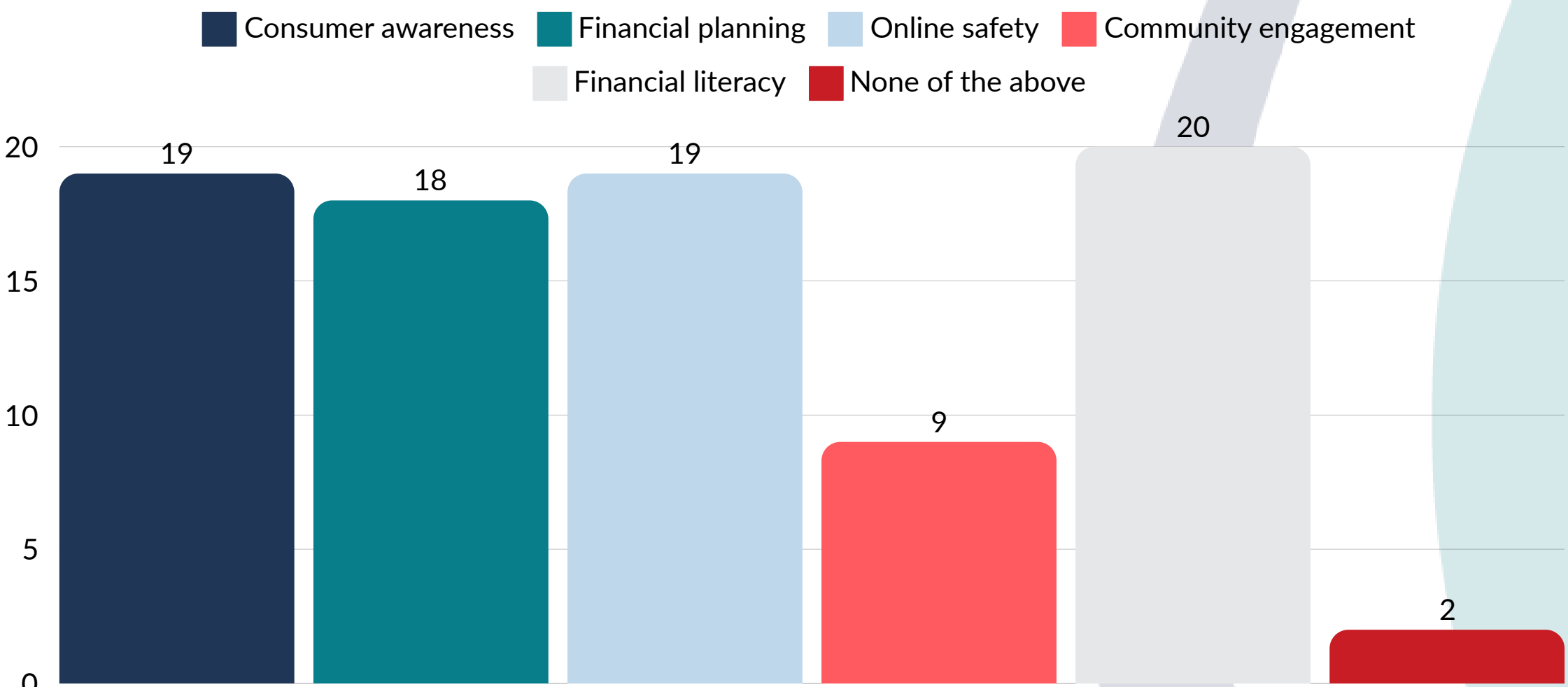
When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the “My Life My Finance module”, just over a quarter of parents (26%) selected thinking and solving problems as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified managing learning and self (19%), participating in society (16%), and communicating (15%) as important. Only a few parents indicated that cultivating well-being (14%) and being creative (10%) applied to their child's needs (see figure 19).



(Figure 19)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "My Life My Finance Module"?

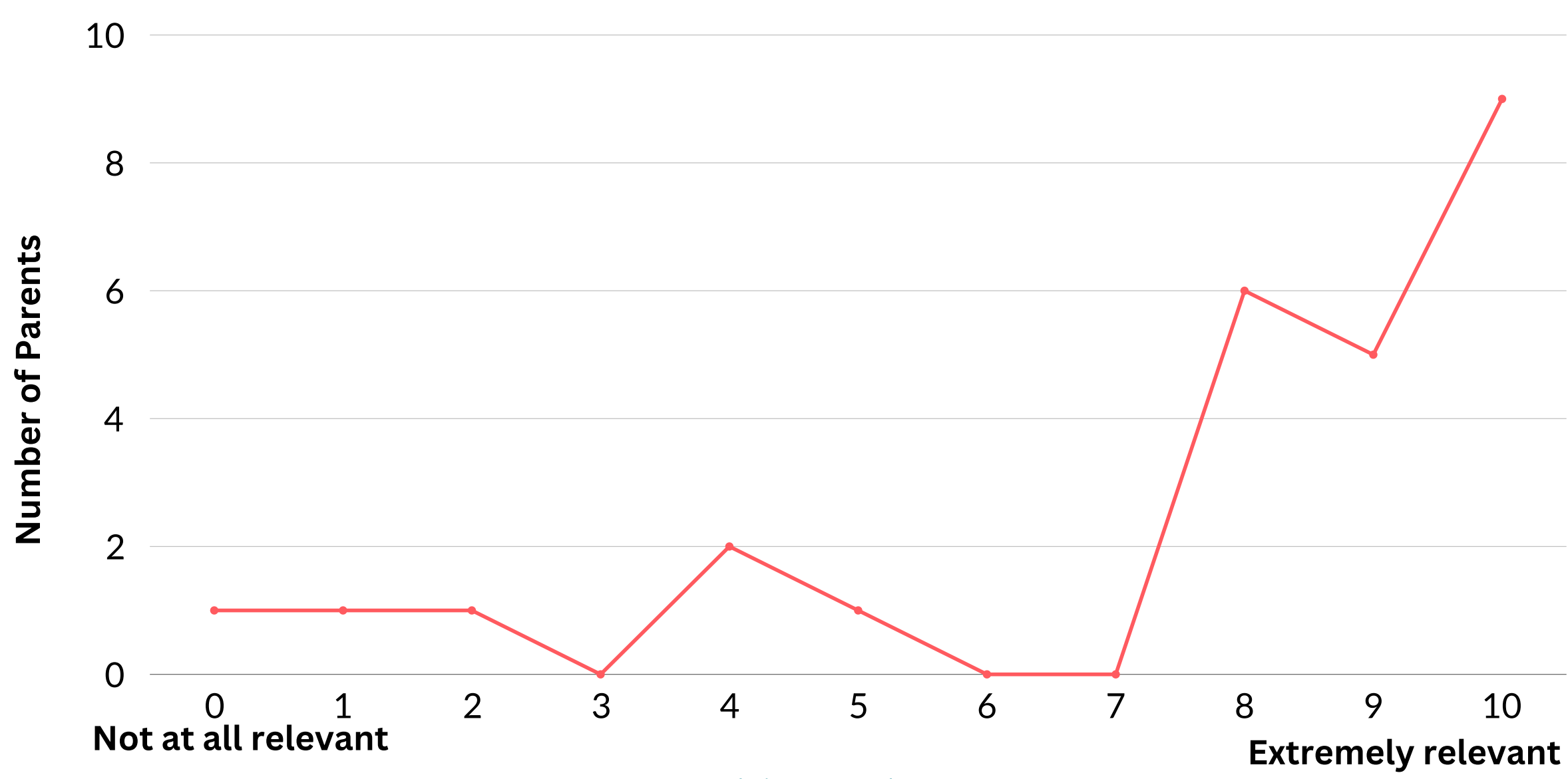
The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these categories would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (23%) selected financial literacy as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified consumer awareness (22%), online safety (22%), and financial planning (21%) as important. Only a few parents indicated that community engagement (10%) or none of the listed learning outcomes (2%) applied to their child's needs (see figure 20).



(Figure 20)

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?

Parents were asked to what extent this elective would be relevant to their child's individual needs. Most parents (76%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. Only a few (12%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs. Another few parents (12%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating that they found the elective to be of little or no relevance (see Figure 21).



(Figure 21)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Level (2):Physical Education Elective Module



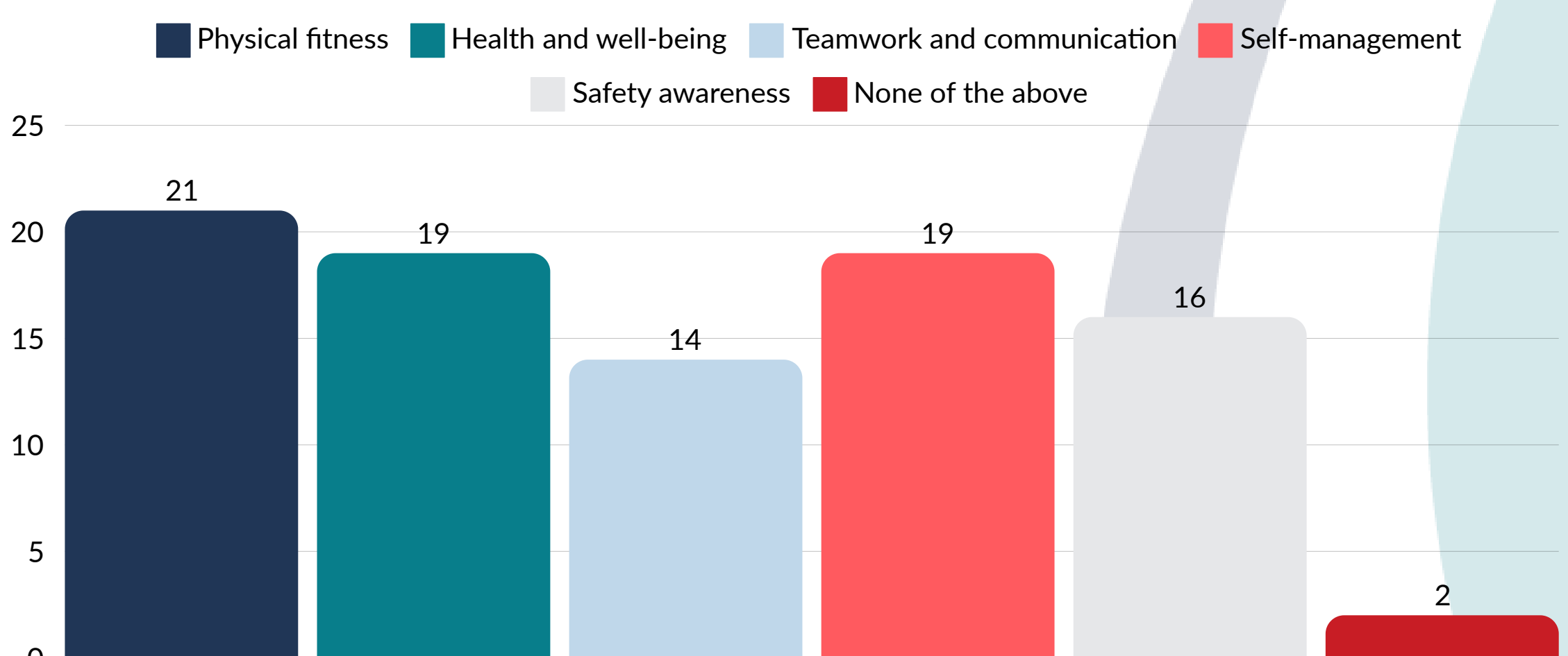
When asked about the abilities and skills aligned with their child's needs through participation in the physical education elective module, less than a quarter of parents (21%) selected thinking and solving problems as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified cultivating well-being (19%), participating in society (18%), and managing learning and self (17%) as important. A smaller number of parents indicated that communicating (13%) and being creative (12%) applied to their child's needs (see figure 22).



(Figure 22)

In your opinion, which abilities and skills would be aligned with your child's needs through participation in the "Physical Education Elective Module"?

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. Parents were asked which of these categories would be relevant for their child's learning needs. Less than a quarter of parents (23%) selected physical fitness as the most relevant. A smaller number of parents identified health and well-being (21%), self-management (21%), safety awareness (18%), and teamwork and communication (15%) as important. Only a few parents (2%) indicated that none of the listed learning outcomes applied to their child's needs (see figure 23).

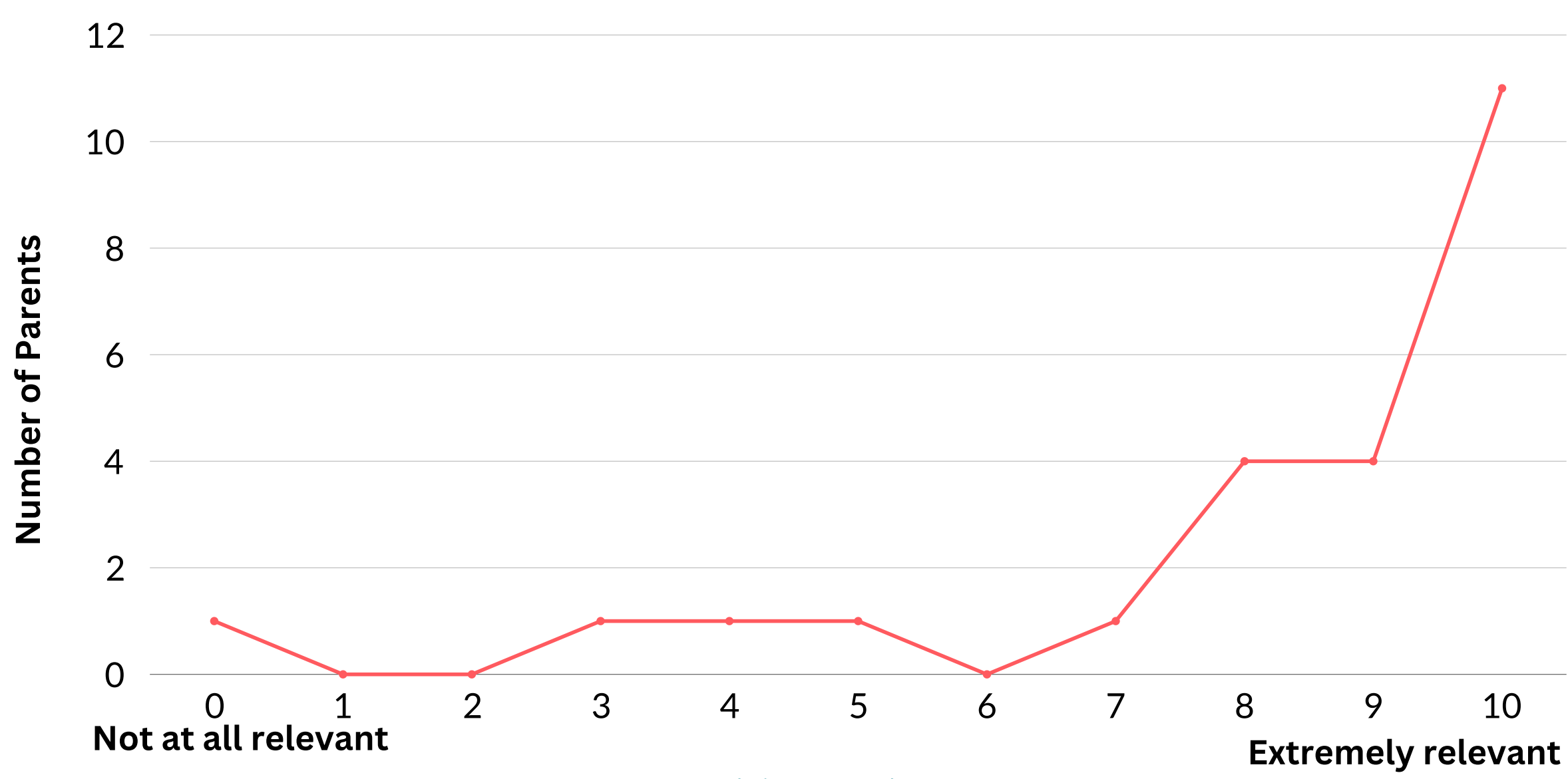


(Figure 23)

The NCCA has developed learning outcomes for this elective. We have summarised them into the following categories. Which of these would be relevant for your child's learning needs?



Parents were asked to what extent this elective would be relevant to their child's individual needs. Most parents (84%) rated it between 7 and 10, indicating a high level of relevance. A few parents (8%) rated it between 0 and 3, indicating that they found the elective to be of little or no relevance. Another few parents (8%) gave a moderate rating between 4 and 6, suggesting that some aspects of the elective may be beneficial but not fully aligned with their child's needs (see Figure 24).



(Figure 24)
To what extent will this elective will be relevant for your child's individual needs?



Suggestions for New Elective Modules and Ideas

When parents were asked what new elective modules or ideas, they think should be added to help meet their child's needs, their responses included a variety of suggestions that focus on life skills, personal development, and career readiness. Some parents emphasised the importance of practical life skills, such as self-care (grooming, putting on shoes), cooking, and basic literacy development.

Others suggested including modules on business skills like writing a business plan, exploring creative skills, and learning problem-solving and organisational skills. A few parents pointed out the importance of aquatics/swimming as a life skill, as well as modules focused on the harmful effects of social networking and online gaming.

Practical life skills such as nutrition, understanding food labels, and simple healthy cooking were also mentioned. Additionally, there were suggestions to introduce topics related to digital and AI, business management, data analytics, and marketing management.

Several responses focused on real-life mathematics, such as understanding payslips, savings accounts, and public transport timetables. Parents also recommended modules to prepare students for the world of work, including job options, practical administration skills, and IT skills.

Other suggestions included learning respect for differing views, self-advocacy, conflict management, and how to say "no" in various contexts, such as with peers, authority figures, or strangers.



Focus Group Findings

In the online focus group, parents were asked to share their personal experiences with the special educational needs of their children. The focus groups included a set of questions designed to gather feedback and help the National Parents Council better represent parents' voices. This part of the report will highlight the experiences parents shared, along with their suggestions for improving current Special Educational Needs Programmes. A total of 3 questions were asked during the discussions, as listed below:

1. What do you think of the presentation's findings? Is there anything you would like to comment on further?

After reviewing the survey results on the proposed curriculum, parents highlighted key areas for improvement, particularly in fostering inclusion, belonging, and life skills for students. A major concern was integrating students from special classes into the broader school community, ensuring they feel accepted and valued. Parents stressed that an inclusive environment builds confidence and better prepares students for future workforce opportunities.

To enhance real-world readiness, parents recommended incorporating skills-based workshops in the senior cycle, equipping students with practical tools beyond academics. They also advocated for greater peer interaction in both academic and extracurricular settings to develop social skills essential for life beyond school.

One parent emphasised that collaboration between students with and without special educational needs fosters mutual understanding and awareness of different strengths and challenges. Additionally, parents suggested incorporating life skills courses such as music, art, and painting, which would allow students to explore interests beyond their academic tracks and contribute to holistic development.

While parents appreciated the curriculum's flexibility, they called for additional support to ensure equal opportunities for all students, particularly those in special education programmes. They also sought more clarity on pathways after completing Level 1 (L1) and Level 2 (L2) programmes, emphasising the need for clear post-school opportunities.

2. What do you think is missing in the curriculum, what can be added to offer more value?

Parents felt there were several areas in the curriculum that could be expanded or enhanced to better serve the diverse special educational needs of students:



Space to Develop Interests

Many parents emphasised the importance of giving students the space to explore and develop their interests. While some students may excel in academics, others may thrive in the arts, sports, or technical subjects. Parents called for more flexibility to allow students to pursue their passions, whether through electives, extracurriculars, or special projects.

Practical Tools and Gadgets

Several parents suggested that providing students with the necessary tools to develop their skills, such as canvas, art supplies, and other equipment related to their hobbies, would greatly enhance their learning experience. These resources would help them fully explore their talents and contribute to their overall development.

Healthy Relationships and Social Skills

Given that many students are vulnerable, parents stressed the importance of teaching children how to develop healthy relationships. This could include learning about boundaries, emotional intelligence, and how to interact respectfully with others. By focusing on these aspects, students could avoid social isolation or potential harm and build a supportive network during their school years and beyond.

Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE)

Parents asked for a curriculum similar to SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education) that could be incorporated into L1 and L2 programmes. This curriculum could focus on the emotional, social, and mental well-being of students, providing them with tools to deal with challenges in their personal lives.

Clear Pathways After L1 and L2 Programmes

Parents raised concerns about the lack of information available regarding what comes next after completing the L1 and L2 programmes. They are eager to understand the next steps in terms of higher education, vocational training, and career pathways, ensuring their children do not feel lost or unsupported once they complete the programme.



Scholarships and Sponsorships for Future Development

There was a strong consensus that the curriculum should help bridge the gap between school and the future. Parents suggested that scholarships or sponsorships could be offered to students to help them pursue higher education or vocational training after school. This would give them access to further studies, particularly in fields they are passionate about, which could otherwise be out of reach due to financial or other constraints.

Partnerships with Universities and Career Development

Some parents suggested forming partnerships with universities to offer students opportunities for advanced studies. While there are some opportunities available in particular subjects, parents noted that these programmes should align more closely with students' individual interests. Expanding this could help provide a more tailored educational experience and give students a clear path forward after completing their senior cycle.

3. General comments and observations?

Parents expressed general support for the curriculum's elective nature, as it offers students the freedom to choose subjects based on their interests. However, some parents pointed out that not all schools offer the same electives, which could limit students' choices depending on their school's resources and offerings.

Additionally, the idea of providing online classes was raised by parents who feel that some subjects should be available to students online, especially in cases where schools do not have the resources to teach certain electives. Offering these options online would give students in different schools more access to a broader range of subjects and help bridge the gap in educational resources across schools.

Finally, parents also highlighted the need for greater clarity in terms of the future pathways available to students. They expressed a desire for more structured guidance on what to do after completing L1 and L2, as well as clearer communication about how the curriculum will evolve to better meet students' individual needs, particularly for those in special education.



Conclusion

This report provides insight into parents' perspectives on the enhancements to special educational needs programmes in the junior and senior cycles, highlighting both positive developments and areas that require further refinement. The findings emphasise the need for a curriculum that is accessible, equitable, and tailored to the diverse needs of students with additional learning requirements.

By improving clarity around future pathways, expanding access to electives, the education system can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Ensuring continuous dialogue and adaptation will help provide all students with the skills, resources, and opportunities necessary for their personal and academic growth.

Skills For Life, Priority Learning Unit (PLU) - Junior Cycle

Appendix 1

Q3. If none of the above, please tell us why?

1. Not relevant
2. My child is significantly disabled, can do very little for themselves
3. Alot needs to be practical experiences not just sitting in a classroom listening to someone. Is personal care how to take care of a household too, because that should also be included.
4. No place for highly academic children with anxiety who need to be academically challenged but can't cope in the mainstream classroom

Redevelopment of the Post-Primary Special Educational Needs Programmes - Senior Cycle

Appendix 2

Q3. If none of the above, please tell us why?

1. My child's time would be best spent learning how to manage his self care needs and learning how to behave himself in public. He has a severe ID.

Q7. If none of the above, please tell us why?

2. Literacy and maths more important
3. Aquatic/swimming activities should be included.

Q11. If none of the above, please tell us why?

1. Not relevant

Q15. If none of the above, please tell us why?

2. ghkjuhj
3. Not relevant
4. Reading should be part of Literature midule

Q29. What new elective modules or ideas do you think should be added to help meet your child's needs? Please share any ideas you believe would be beneficial.

1. Being out in the community
Self care, grooming, putting on shoes etc
Cooking
2. Help with the development of basic literacy skills.
3. Creativity and how to write a business plan to start a project/idea.
Exploring creative skills the child possesses and developing on them authentically.
4. Aquatics/swimming should be included as a module or within the Physical Education module. It is an essential life skill and very important for safety and health and wellbeing.
5. Harmful effects of social networking and online gaming.
6. Problem solving and organisational skills
7. na
8. Digital and AI
Business Management
Data Analytics
Marketing Management
9. Nutrition and understanding food labels as well as basic cooking skills and simple healthy cooking recipes for life. Relaxation techniques and mindfulness
10. Real life maths like payslips, savings accounts, public transport timetables
11. Personal care, basic cooking, travel
12. Preparing for the world of work, how to get a job, job options available if not going to college. Learning practical administration skills/IT skills to assist with getting a job.
13. Respecting the differing views of other people (religious, political, LGBT etc)
Self-advocacy and conflict management Learning how to say "no" in all sorts of contexts, with peers, people in authority, pleasant strangers