

Teaching Beyond Performance: A Psychoanalytic Framework for Emotionally Literate and Transformative Pedagogy

Reza Moezzi^{1,2*}, Mohammad Gheibi³, Keyvan Salehi⁴

¹ Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Viimsi School, 74001, Viimsi, Estonia

² Faculty of Mechatronics, Informatics and Interdisciplinary Studies, Technical University of Liberec, 461 17 Liberec, Czech Republic

³ Institute for Nanomaterials, Advanced Technologies and Innovation, Technical University of Liberec, Studentská 1402/2, 461 17 Liberec, Czech Republic

⁴ Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding Author: reza.moezzi@viimsi.edue.ee

Abstract

Conventional educational models often prioritize cognitive performance while neglecting the emotional and relational realities of classroom life. This study explores the educational and mental development of youth by examining how emotionally literate pedagogy, grounded in psychoanalytic insight, can reshape the teacher–student relationship and promote deeper learning. Drawing on feedback from students in Mathematics course for 7th-grade students at “Viimsi” school in Estonia, the study explores how unconscious processes such as transference, emotional projection, and affective regulation shape the learning environment. We contend that teaching is not merely an intellectual task but an emotionally charged encounter, where both students and educators bring unspoken inner worlds. By reframing the role of the teacher as a relational presence rather than a performance-driven figure, we advocate for pedagogical sobriety: the capacity to teach without emotional dependency on praise, fear, or validation. The findings suggest that integrating emotionally informed reflection into pedagogy fosters deeper student engagement, psychological safety, and meaningful learning. The paper concludes by proposing practical directions for building emotionally responsive classrooms that honour both the cognitive and affective dimensions of education.

Keywords: Youth Educational Development; Psychoanalytic Pedagogy; Emotional Literacy in Education; Teacher–Student Dynamics; Human-Centered Learning

1. Introduction

Numerous cultural, environmental, and psychological elements are closely related to the development of children and young people (Nash et al, 2024; Martin-Barrado et al., 2024). Conventional pedagogical models continue to overlook the emotional and relational aspects of learning environments, despite the fact that cognitive performance has long been the primary focus of education. Thus, integrated approaches that focus on students' personal growth and emotional well-being in addition to their academic

achievement are even more important in the AI era. Estonia is a shining example of technical progress in contemporary Europe, hailed for its efficiency-driven processes and digital innovation (Eremina et al., 2019). Beneath this exterior, however, is a civilization moulded by a history of psychological restraint, repression, and occupation. Even if they are frequently unsaid, these historical wounds still have an impact on public institutions, such as the educational system. The historical and geopolitical background of the nation has had a significant impact on its educational and cultural systems. Due to its history of foreign occupation, Estonia has created a unique collective identity characterized by the necessity of defending its boundaries, both literally and figuratively. This border-conscious mindset was examined by Berg et al. (2002), who pointed out that Estonians have been subjected to multiple linguistic, cultural, and political invasions. A strong defensive stance that permeates not only politics but also educational and societal institutions has been fostered by these frequent invasions. The Baltic region saw significant structural changes as a result of the post-Soviet transition. (Maslo et al., 2022) looked studied how neo-liberal reforms interacted with the distinct sociocultural realities of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. They found that these local contexts had a significant impact on how global education trends were received and applied. Similarly, (Márton., 2018) emphasizes that while futures studies and related educational paradigms experienced a scientific renaissance in post-1990 Estonia, their trajectory was uneven, revealing the complex interrelationship between national transformation and intellectual disciplines.

As a result, Estonian education's role in cultural reproduction cannot be separated. Makoid et al. (2021) showed how traditional knowledge is very compatible with behaviourist educational theories which view teaching, education, and rearing as interchangeable processes of external development management in their study of Estonian proverbs. Their investigation revealed a recurrent emphasis on authority, discipline, and conformity ideals that stem from historical survival strategies as well as educational traditions. This is repeated by historical educational leaders such as Peeter Põld, who defended authority-based education while recognizing its failure to foster individualism and critical thinking. By examining how Estonian educators create the idea of the "problem child," Leino et al. (2002) brought these dynamics into the present. Their ethnographic study demonstrates how pedagogical settings frequently pathologize deviations from normative classroom behaviour, such as difficulties with time management, voice control, and obedience. These results demonstrate the residual impact of both socialist control mechanisms and new neoliberal management strategies, and they are consistent with larger trends of norm enforcement in schools.

(Byrne et al., 2021) through an empirical analysis using OECD PIAAC data, provided evidence of the measurable impact of Estonia's education reforms on adult competencies, highlighting disparities between Estonian and Russian-speaking populations. His findings suggest that the post-independence reforms produced a tangible skill dividend, underlining the state's active role in shaping educational outcomes and labor market

trajectories. Sustainability, culturally and environmentally have also emerged as a central educational concern. (Veisson et al., 2018) reported that Estonian teachers prioritize the preservation of national language and natural landscapes, particularly in light of globalization and ecological threats. This emphasis on national continuity through education is indicative of a broader commitment to cultural sustainability in a small and vulnerable nation. In this context of transformation, (Eisenschmidt et al., 2025) proposed a forward-looking conceptual model for school improvement in Estonia based on distributed leadership, co-creation, and evidence-driven practices. Her "Future School" framework highlights an increasing shift from hierarchical control to participatory school cultures, although challenges remain in fully realizing this vision.

However, resistance to change remains a significant barrier. According to (Pihlak et al., 2012), fear is a common reason for resistance in Estonia and India, especially when change initiatives result in more work or ambiguous instructions. Though their efficacy varies based on context and content, education and communication are essential tools for overcoming such resistance. We start to get closer to the psychological realm as we shift from these institutional and structural viewpoints toward more personal and affective aspects of the Estonian educational experience. For example, a study by Lahikainen et al. (2006) examined how parents evaluate fear and how Estonian and Finnish children express it. According to the study, Estonian children are more likely than their parents to express concerns about observable behaviour. This disparity highlights a crucial area in which educational psychology needs to step in: seeing the child as an independent emotional being whose psychological makeup may differ greatly from that of adults, rather than just as a subject of instruction and discipline.

While historical experience and cultural reproduction have played foundational roles in shaping the structure and philosophy of education in Estonia, the contemporary challenges facing students and teachers call for a more nuanced understanding—one that addresses not only systemic or curricular issues but also the affective and unconscious dimensions of learning. This is where the insights of psychoanalysis offer a valuable, if underutilized, framework. As (Mayes, 2009) noted, although many curriculum scholars have interpreted psychoanalytic theory in educational contexts, direct engagement with what psychoanalysts themselves have said about teaching and learning remains limited. Psychoanalytic thinkers argue that teaching and learning are deeply emotional and ethical processes that involve both student and teacher in their full psychodynamic complexity. Key psychoanalytic concepts such as transference, countertransference, and object relations are not merely clinical constructs but have profound implications for classroom dynamics. These concepts help us understand how unconscious emotional responses such as authority anxiety, fear of failure, or identification with the teacher may shape the behaviour of both students and educators. (Bainbridge, 2018) built on this by framing countertransference in schools not as pathology but as a useful emotional signal that, if properly interpreted, can deepen a teacher's awareness of institutional and relational dynamics. He introduces the idea of "transferential response," a pedagogically-specific

term for the intense emotional exchanges between teacher and student that can mirror familial or societal dynamics “Bainbridge”. This approach has been championed by psychoanalytic pedagogy movements, such as the Istanbul Psychoanalytic Study Group, which aim to institutionalize such insights in educational practice. Psychoanalysis also helps us conceptualize the ideological function of subjects like mathematics. Alexandre Pais, drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and the philosophy of Slavoj Žižek, critiques the idea that mathematics is a neutral cognitive domain. Instead, he argues that students’ learning experiences are shaped by the broader political economy, where school subjects operate as ideological tools that inscribe subjectivity, exclusion, and compliance (Paris, 2016). This resonates with the Estonian context, where national identity, language, and authority intersect in the classroom in highly effective ways.

Historically, the application of psychoanalysis to education has had profound effects. Nick Midgley revisited the early pedagogical experiments of Anna Freud, particularly the “Matchbox School,” which sought to incorporate psychoanalytic insights into progressive education. This work illustrates the potential of psychoanalysis not just as a tool for therapy but as a foundational perspective on emotional development, institutional structure, and the psychological needs of learners (Midgley, 2008). (Winship, 2021) complements this view by tracing the evolution of the mental health agenda in schools from early 20th-century psychoanalytically-informed education to modern policies like Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). His argument that schools are increasingly called upon to act as mental health hubs, especially in the wake of global crises like COVID-19 highlights the urgency of integrating mental and emotional education into mainstream schooling. Recent global research further underlines the need for culturally sensitive psychoanalytic education. Jill Savege Scharff’s long-term engagement with Chinese psychotherapists illustrated how metaphor, cultural trauma, and rapid socio-economic change produce unique psychological symptoms in students—from academic anxiety to emotional withdrawal. Her concept of “Empty Heart Disease,” while specific to China, echoes the sense of emotional suppression and cultural dislocation found in post-socialist societies like Estonia (Scharff et al., 2025). Alan A. Block further advocates for a pedagogy that embraces uncertainty, emotional complexity, and creativity. He proposes a model of education rooted in ironic engagement, where teachers are encouraged to explore rather than suppress psychological turbulence in the classroom. His work points to the importance of playfulness, hope, and a willingness to confront emotional discomfort as essential tools in teaching and learning (Block, 2019).

To situate this study within the broader landscape of academic discourse, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Scopus database, focusing on the intersection of psychoanalysis and education. Figure 1 presents a network analysis of the most frequently co-occurring keywords within this field. The results reveal a dense clustering of terms such as psychoanalysis, education, training, human, and psychodynamics, suggesting an active scholarly dialogue around the psychological dimensions of pedagogy and human development. Notably, the recurring presence of

psychotherapy, supervision, and developmental psychology indicates that educational research increasingly overlaps with clinical and therapeutic disciplines.

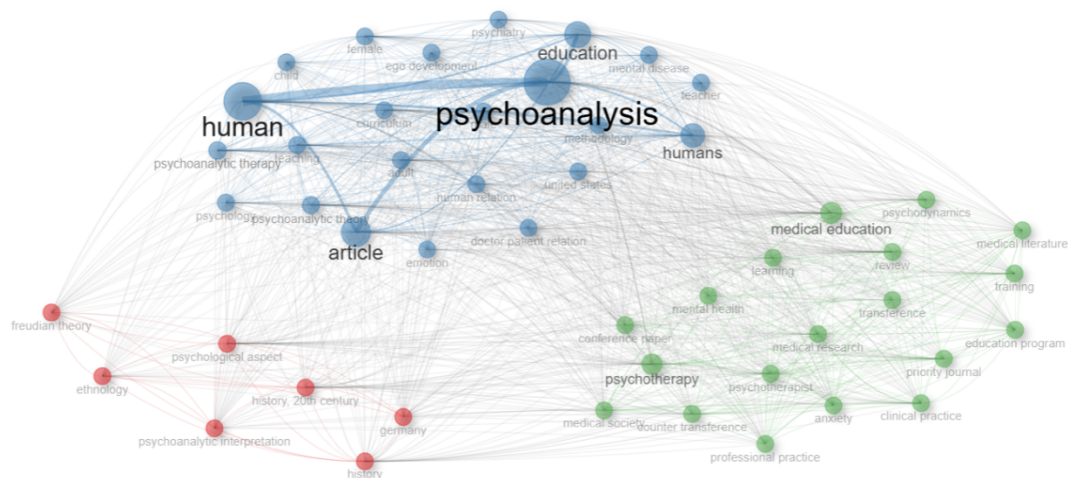


Figure 1. Network Visualization of Keyword Co-occurrence in the Field of Psychoanalysis and Education.

Figure 2 offers a Sankey diagram that illustrates the relational flow between countries, keywords, and publication sources. This visual demonstrates that the leading contributors to research at the nexus of psychoanalysis and education are predominantly from the United States, Brazil, and the United Kingdom. These countries serve as key nodes for scholarly production and epistemic influence. In terms of academic dissemination, the International Journal of Psychoanalysis emerges as the most prominent publication venue, reflecting the field’s continued engagement with both classical and contemporary psychoanalytic paradigms.

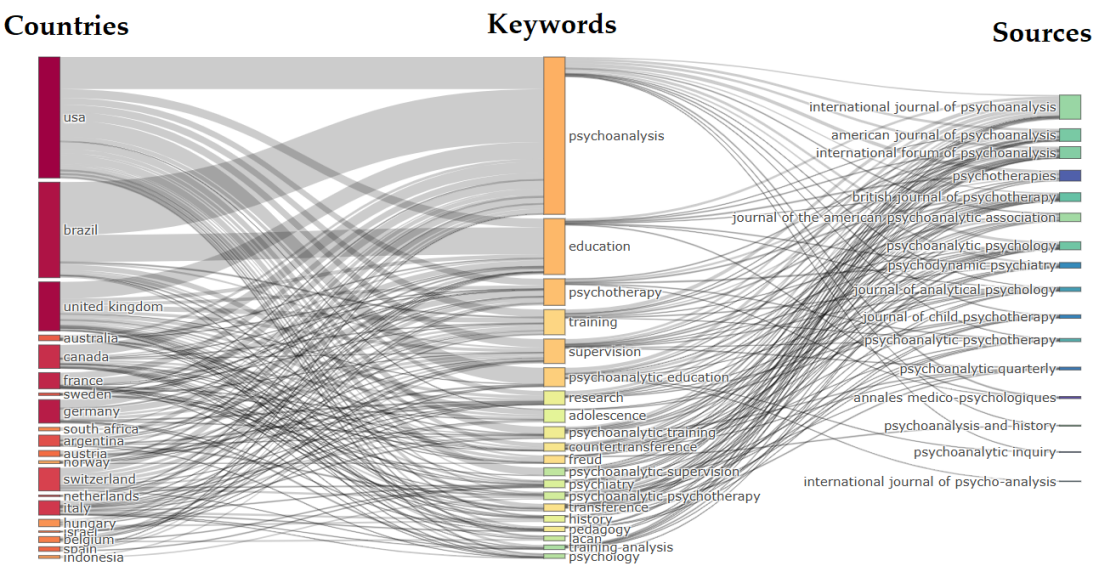


Figure 2. Sankey Diagram Showing the Relationship Between Countries, Keywords, and Source Journals.

Despite the richness of this global dialogue, the bibliometric analysis reveals a relative absence of scholarly engagement from continental Europe particularly in the Baltic region. To the best knowledge of the authors, no substantial research has yet explored the integration of psychoanalysis into educational practices in Estonia, marking this study as a pioneering contribution in this context. Together, these psychoanalytic perspectives suggest that Estonian education while structurally successful in many ways may benefit from a deeper exploration of the unconscious forces shaping its classrooms. Fear, resistance to change, and the cultural inheritance of authoritarianism do not simply reside in policy or practice; they are lived daily in the affective exchanges between students and teachers. Understanding and transforming these dynamics requires not only pedagogical reform but also psychological insight. In this paper, we examine this case in detail and suggest that without integrating psycho-emotional frameworks into pedagogy, Estonia risks raising students who are technically competent but emotionally restricted. In the age of artificial intelligence, what may distinguish us most as human is not logic, but empathy, resilience, and emotional depth. Education must become a space where these traits are cultivated not suppressed.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to investigate students' emotional and cognitive reactions to a life-integrated mathematics teaching approach, this study used a subjective interpretive methodology based on psychoanalytic educational theory. In particular, the need to comprehend how classroom experiences resonate not only at the level of knowledge acquisition but also at the level of emotional and existential development informed the research design, as did the growing body of literature that highlights the psychodynamic complexity of teaching and learning processes (Mayes, 2009; Bainbridge, 2018).

2.1 Participants and Context

The participants consisted of 7th grade students at “Viimsi” school, who had participated in a mathematics course taught with an emphasis on meaning-making, emotional engagement, and life relevance. In the last class, the questionnaire had been sent to 9 students and 8 responded anonymously. The course was taught not only on math subjects but also around a leadership and ethics framework to foster reflective and emotionally intelligent learning rather than rote calculation or performance-focused instruction.

2.2 Survey Instrument

Data collection was conducted through a 10-item subjective satisfaction survey developed specifically for this study as Appendix. The survey questions were designed not merely to measure superficial satisfaction, but to uncover affective and unconscious resonances of the students' learning experiences. Each item was rated on a 5-point satisfaction scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), reflecting levels of emotional and cognitive engagement.

The survey questions aimed to assess dimensions of psychoanalytically relevant constructs such as:

- Transference and trust (e.g., "*Tundides oli toetav ja turvaline õhkkond*"; "*Õpetaja oli kannatlik ja hooliv*")
- Symbolic and emotional meaning-making (e.g., "*Matemaatikatunnid aitasid mul mõista elu ja selle tähendust paremini*"; "*Ma õppisin tundides midagi, mis on seotud eluga väljaspool kooli*")
- Ethical-relational teaching (e.g., "*Ma tunnen, et õpetus põhines armastusel ja hoolivusel, mitte hirmul*")
- Ego development and personal growth (e.g., "*Olen selle kursuse jooksul kasvanud mitte ainult teadmistes, vaid ka inimesena*")

This design aligns with framework (Mayes, 2009), which posits that authentic teaching engages both teacher and student as emotionally and ethically complete beings, navigating the classroom through dynamics of trust, projection, and growth. Similarly, (Bainbridge, 2018) conception of teacher countertransference provides a valuable lens to interpret student responses not merely as evaluations, but as manifestations of the emotional field within the classroom relationship.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected responses were analysed both quantitatively (mean scores, satisfaction levels) and qualitatively through subjective interpretive analysis. In keeping with Lacanian psychoanalytic educational theory (Pais, 2015), student answers were treated not just as expressions of satisfaction but as potential signifiers of deeper emotional and social positioning within the learning environment.

The high-order themes were interpreted in light of transference patterns, object relations, and the emergence of the subject in relation to knowledge and authority. The aim was to recognize how pedagogical acts, seemingly cognitive, might evoke unconscious relational dynamics, influencing both learning and identity formation.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and students were informed that their feedback would be used solely for reflective and developmental purposes. Given the emotional sensitivity of some questions, care was taken to avoid any psychological discomfort, and the results were interpreted with respect and confidentiality.

3. Results and Analysis of the Student Satisfaction Survey

3.1 Overview of the Instrument

The survey consisted of ten questions answered on a 5-point satisfaction scale (1 = Very Dissatisfied; 5 = Very Satisfied), targeting not only cognitive understanding of

mathematics but also emotional, existential, and psychosocial dimensions. The questions were carefully designed to probe:

- Cognitive clarity and pedagogical delivery (Q1, Q5, Q9)
- Emotional safety and support (Q2, Q3, Q4)
- Life relevance and integration of life skills (Q5, Q6, Q8, Q10)
- Psycho-affective environment (Q7)
- Student's perceived personal growth (Q10)

This instrument intentionally integrates surface and depth education theory (Marton, 2018; Kanter et al., 2015), as well as existential pedagogy and psychoanalytic educational insights, to capture how affect, security, and meaning-making are engaged through instruction.

3.2 Quantitative Summary

We convert qualitative data into a weighted scale:

Very Satisfied = +2

Satisfied = +1

Neutral = 0

Dissatisfied = -1

Very Dissatisfied = -2

This enables normalized satisfaction scores and comparative analysis, see Table 1.

Table 1. normalized satisfaction scores based on the results of questionnaire.

Question	+2 (VS)	+1 (S)	0 (N)	-1 (D)	-2 (VD)	Net Score	Normalized (out of 100)
Q1	3	2	1	2	0	3	42.8
Q2	5	1	1	1	0	7	71.4
Q3	5	2	0	1	0	9	85.7
Q4	5	1	1	1	0	7	71.4
Q5	3	2	2	0	1	5	57.1
Q6	3	1	1	2	0	3	42.8
Q7	5	0	1	1	0	7	71.4
Q8	2	2	1	1	1	2	28.5
Q9	3	1	1	2	0	2	28.5
Q10	3	2	1	2	0	3	42.8

Overall means normalized score has been calculated via equation (1):

$$\frac{42.8+71.4+85.7+71.4+57.1+42.8+71.4+28.5+28.5+42.8}{10} = 54.24 \quad (1)$$

3.3 Qualitative and Psychoanalytical Interpretation

- a. *Relational Trust & Safety (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q7)*: These questions scored highest. Particularly Q3 (“julgustas kaasa mõtlema”) and Q7 (“armastus ja hoolivus mitte hirm”) reveal a safe holding environment (Winnicott). The students felt seen, heard, and not dominated by authority, which fosters autonomy. This reflects successful affective attachment and the internalization of a benevolent authority.
- b. *Epistemological Meaning (Q1, Q5, Q8, Q9)*: These revealed mixed responses. Q1 (“selgitus”) scored moderately; Q8 and Q9 (link to life and utility) scored lowest. Students perhaps struggled to connect the abstract nature of mathematics with their emotional and real-world narratives. There may be a disconnect between symbolic knowledge and lived experience, pointing to an area for pedagogical growth: integrating existential inquiry with formal logic.
- c. *Holistic Growth (Q6, Q10)*: While students acknowledge some personal development and value integrating life skills, the results suggest fragmentation. For some, the experience was transformational; others remained in surface engagement. Q10’s mix reflects inner differentiation—some grew, others remained inert. This aligns with Eriksonian psychosocial theory, where identity consolidation is uneven in adolescence.
- d. *Shadow of Resistance*: Several questions show 1–2 dissatisfied responses. These should not be viewed as failure but as part of the resistance mechanism inherent in transformational pedagogy. A student feeling “dissatisfied” may be wrestling with change perhaps defensively reacting to an unfamiliar affective or existential register in a typically abstract subject.

3.4 Mathematical-Reflective Index: Human-Centered Learning Impact (HCLI)

For mathematical evaluation we propose a reflective formula as the equation (2) to assess the weighted emotional-cognitive integration encouraged by (Topali et al, 2025). From a psychoanalytic educational framework, emotional atonement plays a foundational role in forming trust, safety, and transference relationships; cognition represents structured meaning-making; and existential growth addresses the deeper self-integration and motivation for lifelong learning. These are not equal in impact, especially in early and mid-stage learning environments.

$$HCLI_w = \frac{(w_E \cdot E) + (w_C \cdot C) + (w_G \cdot G)}{w_E + w_C + w_G} \quad (2)$$

Where:

- E = Emotional integration (avg. of Q2, Q3, Q4, Q7)
- C = Cognitive integration (avg. of Q1, Q5, Q8, Q9)
- G = Growth/existential integration (avg. of Q6, Q10)

- $w_E=0.45$, $w_C=0.30$, $w_G=0.25$;

The collected responses were Emotional weight (w_E): Emotional containment, mirroring, and relational safety are the prerequisite for internal motivation, affect regulation, and transference work especially in younger learners or transitional education systems like Estonia's.

Cognitive weight (w_C): While essential for curriculum adherence and knowledge construction, cognition in psychoanalysis is always mediated by emotion; thus, it follows rather than leads.

Existential/growth weight (w_G): Although existential insights promote deep integration and authenticity, their developmental emergence often comes after emotional safety and basic cognitive structuring.

Given, $E=74.975$; $C=39.225$; $G=42.8$, see equation (3):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{HCLI}_w &= \frac{(0.45 \cdot 74.975) + (0.30 \cdot 39.225) + (0.25 \cdot 42.8)}{0.45 + 0.30 + 0.25} \\ &= \frac{33.73875 + 11.7675 + 10.7}{1.0} = 56.21 \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

A pedagogical environment that is reasonably humanizing is indicated by a weighted HCLI score of 56.2/100. Although there is strong emotional support, there is a lack of existential anchoring and cognitive fragmentation. According to the psychoanalytic reading, students might experience a sense of belonging and being heard, but they might find it difficult to translate this feeling into intellectual independence or personal significance. This creates opportunities for reflective assignments based on values, story-based math instruction, and dialogue exercises that connect content and emotions. This model aligns pedagogy with unconscious dynamics and deep psychological development, positioning HCLI as a reflective diagnostic framework as well as a satisfaction tool.

4. Discussion and Proposed Framework: Toward a Transformative and Emotionally Literate Pedagogy

The results of our ten-question satisfaction survey reveal not only fluctuating levels of satisfaction but deeper emotional undercurrents within the learning environment. Through a psychoanalytical lens, these variations can be interpreted not simply as evaluative metrics, but as manifestations of unconscious dynamics, affective responses, and unspoken relational forces that define educational spaces. Based on this, we propose a transformative pedagogy that integrates emotional literacy, psychoanalytical principles, and systemic reform.

4.1 Recognizing Emotional Reality in the Classroom: Transference and the Emotional Field

According to the results, while some questions—particularly 2, 3, and 4—received predominantly “very satisfied” responses, others (e.g., 1, 5, 6, 9, and 10) displayed mixed or polarized reactions, with noticeable instances of dissatisfaction. These patterns may reflect relational dynamics and moments where students unconsciously projected emotional content onto the educator or the content itself. For example, initial ambivalence or dissatisfaction may reflect unresolved emotions related to authority, prior schooling trauma, or fear of judgment. Emotional safety and awareness of transference should become core pedagogical competencies. Teachers should be trained to notice not just what is being communicated, but how and why through tone, silence, resistance, or praise. Classrooms must be treated as emotionally co-constructed spaces, where both students and teacher are vulnerable participants.

4.2 Pedagogical Sobriety: Teachers Free from Fear and Addiction

In questions where satisfaction declined (e.g., questions 6, 8, 9), responses hinted at inconsistent engagement or ambivalence. This may correspond not to pedagogical weakness, but to deeper anxieties or unresolved behaviours both among students and educators. Teachers may unconsciously teach from spaces of anxiety overperformance, perfectionism, or fear of emotional exposure. When these internal compulsions shape pedagogy, they subtly distort relational dynamics, leading to student discomfort or emotional withdrawal. Teacher training should include reflective practices and emotional supervision spaces (akin to clinical supervision in psychoanalysis), where educators can process their fears, ego defenses, and behavioral addictions. A “sober” pedagogy is one that arises from internal calm rather than reactive control.

4.3 Expanding the Brain’s Learning Model: Beyond the Neocortex

There may be an imbalance between the cognitive and affective domains, as evidenced by the higher satisfaction in questions 2-4 (which are likely related to clarity, structure, or cognitive experience) and lower scores in questions 5-10 (which may be related to emotional tone, expression, or classroom safety). Although they may feel emotionally invisible or underengaged, students are responding well to cognitively challenging material. While the limbic system, which is the source of connection, joy, and emotional resonance, is where true transformation originates, traditional education plays to the neocortex. Emotional moments such as storytelling, intimate sharing, quiet, aesthetic experience, and empathy-centered conversation must all be embraced in curriculum design. Emotions should be incorporated into the very structure of pedagogy, not introduced as an afterthought.

4.4 Psychoanalysis as a Pedagogical Lens (Not a Treatment Tool)

Zones of emotional uncertainty or internal conflict markers of defence mechanisms at work have been revealed by the presence of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" responses (ten in all across the survey). This neutrality could be an attempt by students to protect themselves from relational or emotional discomfort through repression, avoidance, or disconnection. These are signs of intricate internal processes that require acknowledgment rather than teaching failures. Teachers should interpret student behaviour based on psychoanalytic theory, especially ideas like splitting, denial, projection, and introjection. Teachers are affective observers and facilitators of psychological development, but they are not therapists.

4.5 Policy and Administrative Reform: Trauma-Informed Interpretation of Feedback

The variability in satisfaction, especially when one or two low scores contrast with a high overall pattern (e.g., Question 5 or 6), highlights the risk of overemphasizing isolated dissatisfaction. Educational institutions often adopt a risk-averse stance, interpreting emotionally charged feedback as red flags without contextualizing them within a broader emotional field. This mirrors legalistic, rather than emotionally literate, models of school governance. Evaluation frameworks must shift from punitive to trauma-informed, pattern-based analysis. Emotional data should be viewed holistically: recurring satisfaction suggests a strong relational bond, while a single moment of dissatisfaction may reflect temporary projection rather than systemic failure.

To systematize this integration, we propose the following Psycho-Emotional Engagement Index (PEEI) as equation (4):

$$PEEI = \frac{(VS \times 2 + S \times 1) - (D \times 1 + VD \times 2)}{T} \quad (4)$$

Where:

VS = Number of "Very Satisfied" responses

S = Number of "Satisfied" responses

D = Number of "Dissatisfied" responses

VD = Number of "Very Dissatisfied" responses

T = Total number of responses (excluding "Neither" for emotional neutrality)

This index yields a value between -2 (pure dissatisfaction) to +2 (pure satisfaction), with values near zero indicating emotional ambiguity or unconscious conflict. A PEEI closer to ± 0.5 is emotionally significant it may indicate moments of psychic struggle, requiring pedagogical reflection. The findings from PEEI model, seen through a psychoanalytic lens, do not merely evaluate educational effectiveness, they can narrate the emotional lives of students and teachers alike. Satisfaction is not just a score; it is a mirror of attachment, projection, and human striving. If we are to build emotionally

literate classrooms, we must speak this language fluently not with diagnostic finality, but with curiosity, care, and courage.

5. Conclusion

Teaching is more than just imparting knowledge; it's about building relationships. Even if it goes unnoticed via exam results or evaluation forms, every moment in the classroom has emotional significance. The evidence gained from student reflections in this study emphasizes that students react to the educator's emotional and relational holding of the material in addition to what is taught. Students can perceive when teachers exhibit presence, integrity, and emotional sobriety. They react with vulnerability, trust, and inventiveness. In order to transform pedagogy, one must rise beyond the fear-based reasoning of institutional validation and assume a greater responsibility, one that places a premium on human complexity, emotional sensitivity, and inner labor as essential components of high-quality education. This enhances academic rigor rather than lessens it. Both academic and personal development can thrive in a classroom that is sensitive to emotional truth and unconscious dynamics. The invitation, then, is to educate not just the mind, but the person in full to create spaces where both teacher and student can show up not as performers, but as whole, feeling human beings

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data analysis, manuscript drafting, and final approval of this study.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Viimsi School in Viimsi, Estonia, for providing the educational environment in which this research was conducted. Special thanks are extended to the Director of Viimsi School, Mr. Peeter Sipelgas, whose trust, openness, and unwavering support made this reflective and experimental pedagogical study possible.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

All relevant data generated and analyzed during the study are included in the appendix. Additional supporting information may be requested from the corresponding author upon reasonable inquiry.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

References

Bainbridge, A. *Psychoanalysis and Education: Minding a Gap*; First edition.; Taylor and Francis: London, 2018; ISBN 9780429478697.

Berg, E. Local Resistance, National Identity and Global Swings in Post-Soviet Estonia. *Eur Asia Stud* 2002, 54, 109–122, doi:10.1080/09668130120098269.

Block, A.A. *Finding Hope in the Turbulent Classroom: Curriculum Theory, Psychoanalysis, and School-Based Practice*; 1st ed.; Routledge, 2019; ISBN 9780429276323.

Byrne, K.; Plekhanov, A. Education Reforms and Adult Skills: Evidence from Estonia. *Econ Educ Rev* 2021, 82, 102106, doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2021.102106.

Eisenschmidt, E.; Vanari, K. How to Unpack the Black Box of School Culture - A Conceptual Framework for School Improvement in Estonia. *Leadersh Policy Sch* 2025, 1–18, doi:10.1080/15700763.2025.2477154.

Eremina, Y.; Lace, N.; Bistrova, J. Digital Maturity and Corporate Performance: The Case of the Baltic States. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 2019, 5, 54, doi: 10.3390/joitmc5030054.

Kanter, J. H. S. Sullivan and “Interpersonal Learning.” *Smith Coll Stud Soc Work* 2015, 85, 409–420, doi: 10.1080/00377317.2015.1094278.

Lahikainen, A.R.; Kraav, I.; Kirmanen, T.; Taimalu, M. Child-Parent Agreement in the Assessment of Young Children’s Fears: A Comparative Perspective. *J Cross Cult Psychol* 2006, 37, 100–119, doi: 10.1177/0022022105282298.

Leino, M.; Lahelma, E. Constructing and Educating “Problem Children”: The Case of Post-Communist Estonia. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 2002, 6, 79–90, doi:10.1080/13603110110091634.

Martin-Barrado, A.D.; Gomez-Baya, D. A Scoping Review of the Evidence of the 5Cs Model of Positive Youth Development in Europe. *Youth* 2024, 4, 56–79, doi:10.3390/youth4010005.

Mayes, C. The Psychoanalytic View of Teaching and Learning, 1922–2002. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 2009, 41, 539–567, doi: 10.1080/00220270802056674.

Midgley, N. The ‘Matchbox School’ (1927–1932): Anna Freud and the Idea of a ‘Psychoanalytically Informed Education’*. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 2008, 34, 23–42, doi: 10.1080/00754170801895920.

Maslo, I. Baltic Countries: From Post-Socialist to New-Liberal Education? In *International Perspectives on Education and Society*; Wolhuter, C.C., Wiseman, A.W.,

Eds.; Emerald Publishing Limited, 2022; pp. 85–103 ISBN 9781802625189 9781802625172.

Midgley, N. The ‘Matchbox School’ (1927–1932): Anna Freud and the Idea of a ‘Psychoanalytically Informed Education’*. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 2008, 34, 23–42, doi:10.1080/00754170801895920.

Nash, A.; Kennedy, H.; Abraczinskas, M.; Ballonoff Suleiman, A.; Ozer, E.J. Examining the Intersection of Sociopolitical Development and Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes: An Integrated Approach in Youth Participatory Action Research. *Youth* 2024, 4, 679–699, doi:10.3390/youth4020046.

Pais, A. Symbolising the Real of Mathematics Education. *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 2015, 89, 375–391, doi:10.1007/s10649-015-9602-6.

Peipsiääre Rural Municipality Government; Makoid, B.; Liimets, A.; School of Educational Sciences Tallinn University Käsitused Kasvatusest Eesti Vanasõnades Ja Kasvatusteaduses. *Mäetagused* 2021, 80, 31–70, doi: 10.7592/MT2021.80.makoid_liimets.

Pihlak, Ü.; Alas, R. Resistance to Change in Indian, Chinese and Estonian Organizations. *Journal of Indian Business Research* 2012, 4, 224–243, doi: 10.1108/17554191211274767.

Scharff, J.S.; Scharff, D.E. Empty Heart Disease: Teaching and Learning in China. *J Am Psychoanal Assoc* 2025, 73, 33–60, doi:10.1177/00030651241259450.

Topali, P.; Ortega-Arranz, A.; Rodríguez-Triana, M.J.; Er, E.; Khalil, M.; Akçapınar, G. Designing Human-Centered Learning Analytics and Artificial Intelligence in Education Solutions: A Systematic Literature Review. *Behaviour & Information Technology* 2025, 44, 1071–1098, doi: 10.1080/0144929X.2024.2345295.

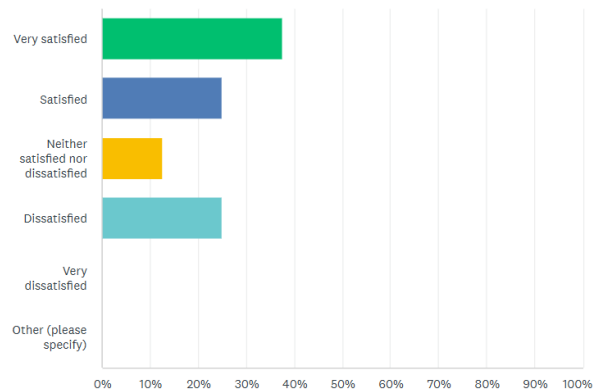
Veisson, M.; Kabaday, A. Exploring the Preschool Teachers’ Views on Professionalism, Quality of Education and Sustainability: International Study in Estonia and Turkey. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 2018, 20, 5–18, doi: 10.2478/jtes-2018-0011.

Winship, G. The Evolution of Mental Health in Schools: Where from, Where Next? *Cambridge Journal of Education* 2021, 51, 589–606, doi: 10.1080/0305764X.2021.1891204.

Appendix

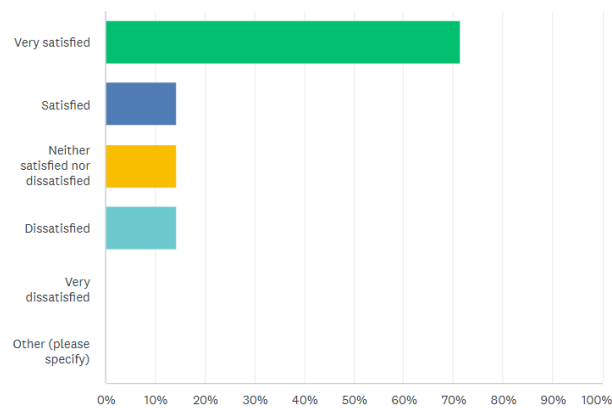
Q1: The teacher was able to explain the topics clearly.

Õpetaja oskas teemasid arusaadavalt selgitada.



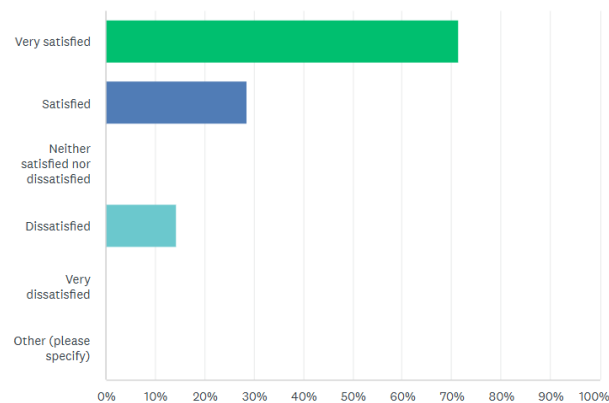
Q2: The atmosphere in the classes was supportive and safe.

Tundides oli toetav ja turvaline õhkkond.



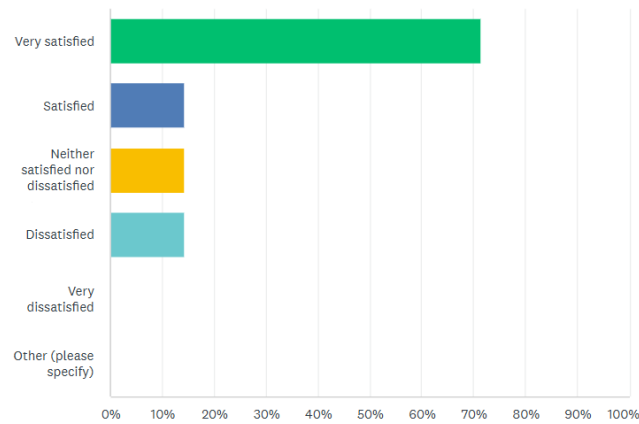
Q3: The teacher encouraged me to think along and ask questions.

Õpetaja julgustas mind kaasa mõtlema ja küsima.



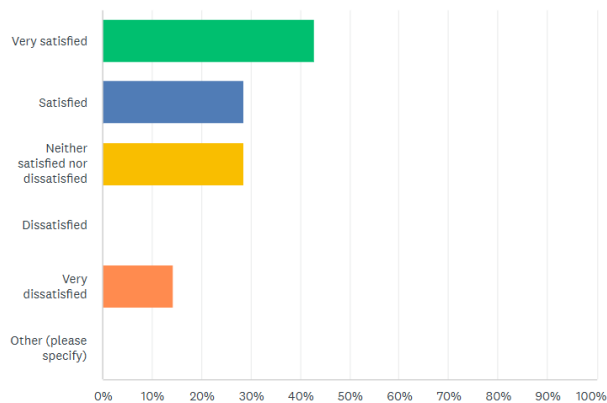
Q4: The teacher was patient and caring.

Õpetaja oli kannatlik ja hooliv.



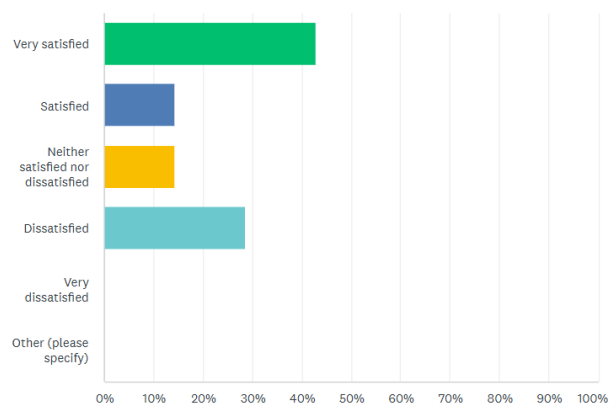
Q5: I learned something in class that is related to life outside of school.

Ma õppisin tundides midagi, mis on seotud eluga väljaspool kooli.



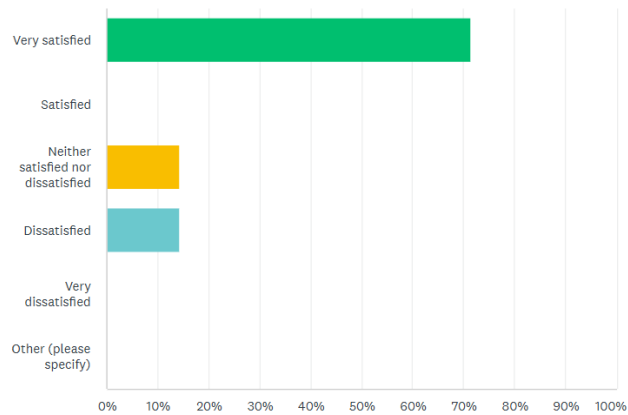
Q6: I prefer that learning combines subject matter and life skills.

Ma eelistan, et õppimine ühendab teema ja eluoskused.



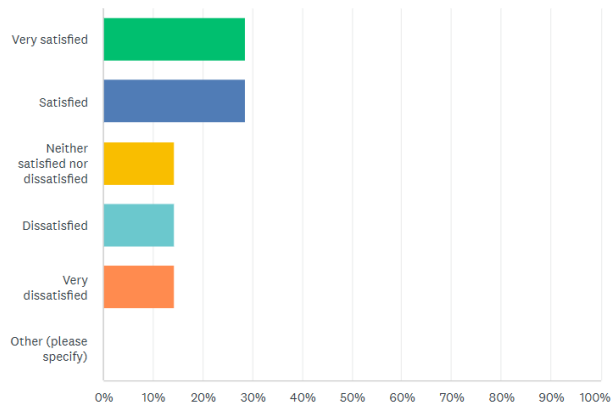
Q7: I feel that the teaching was based on love and care, not fear.

Ma tunnen, et õpetus põhines armastusel ja hoolivusel, mitte hirmul.



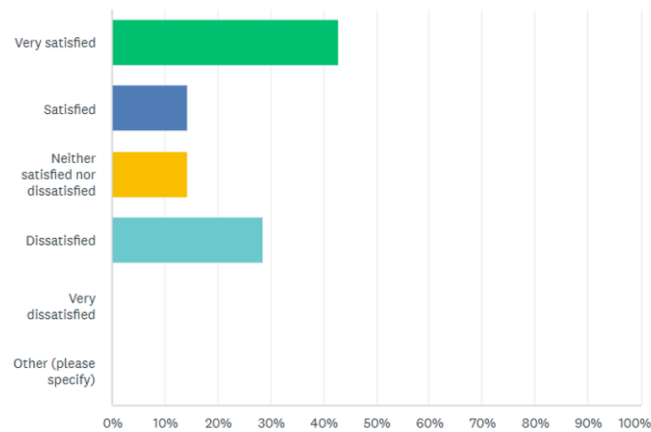
Q8: Math classes helped me understand life and its meaning better.

Matemaatikatunnid aitasid mul mõista elu ja selle tähendust paremini.



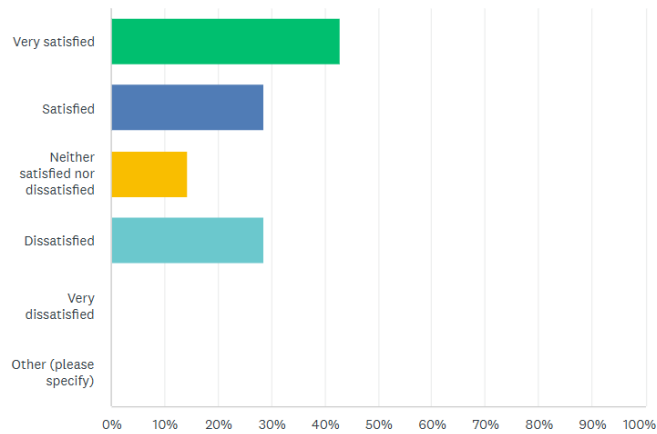
Q9: I am now better able to use math in everyday life.

Ma suudan nüüd paremini kasutada matemaatikat ka igapäevaelus.



Q10: I have grown not only in knowledge but also as a person during this course.

Olen selle kursuse jooksul kasvanud mitte ainult teadmistes, vaid ka inimesena.



Cite this article as: Moezzi R., Gheibi M., Salehi K. Teaching Beyond Performance: A Psychoanalytic Framework for Emotionally Literate and Transformative Pedagogy. *Journal of Arts and Humanities Science*, 2025; 2(1); 38-56.