



# Transpathy and the Relational Affect of Social Justice in Refugee Education

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**Abstract** Using the “levels of concern” lens, this position paper presents guiding principles that articulate the relationship between social justice and refugee education. The paper offers a commentary on the contemporary theory and practice of refugee education through the lens of emotioncy. The discussion begins by exploring the emotional responses such as sympathy and empathy, before moving on to unveil new concepts like metapathy and transpathy. Metapathy signifies a forward-thinking approach, emphasising future thinking, success, and personalised lasting solutions. Transpathy goes further, integrating a deep emotional investment that encompasses love. These levels of concern are woven into a cohesive set of guiding principles, offering teachers, organisations, and researchers more than strategies; they present a visionary pathway for fostering individual empowerment and integration within the refugee community. The paper calls for tangible changes in policy and practice to enhance refugee education by applying levels of concern, relational aspects of social justice, and a comprehensive emotionally invested approach. It concludes with an invitation to create a compassionate and inclusive educational landscape guided by a legacy of empathy, transformation, and love.

**Keywords:** *Refugee education, Levels of concern, Relational affect, Transpathy, Love*

## 1. Introduction

Refugee education is a complex field that goes beyond the usual teaching methods. People with refugee backgrounds are defined as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951, p. 3), face challenges that extend beyond the immediate necessities they might need upon relocating to a new place. For a more extended and sustainable resettlement, particularly in education, greater attention must be paid to their emotional needs. Therefore, educating refugees requires understanding their unique difficulties and emotional needs. As Lynch (2020) observed, traditional theories of social justice frequently overlook these aspects, including the critical consideration of affective equality, which emphasises the value and importance of relationships rooted in emotions, care, and solidarity in the broader framework of social justice (Cantillon & Lynch, 2017).

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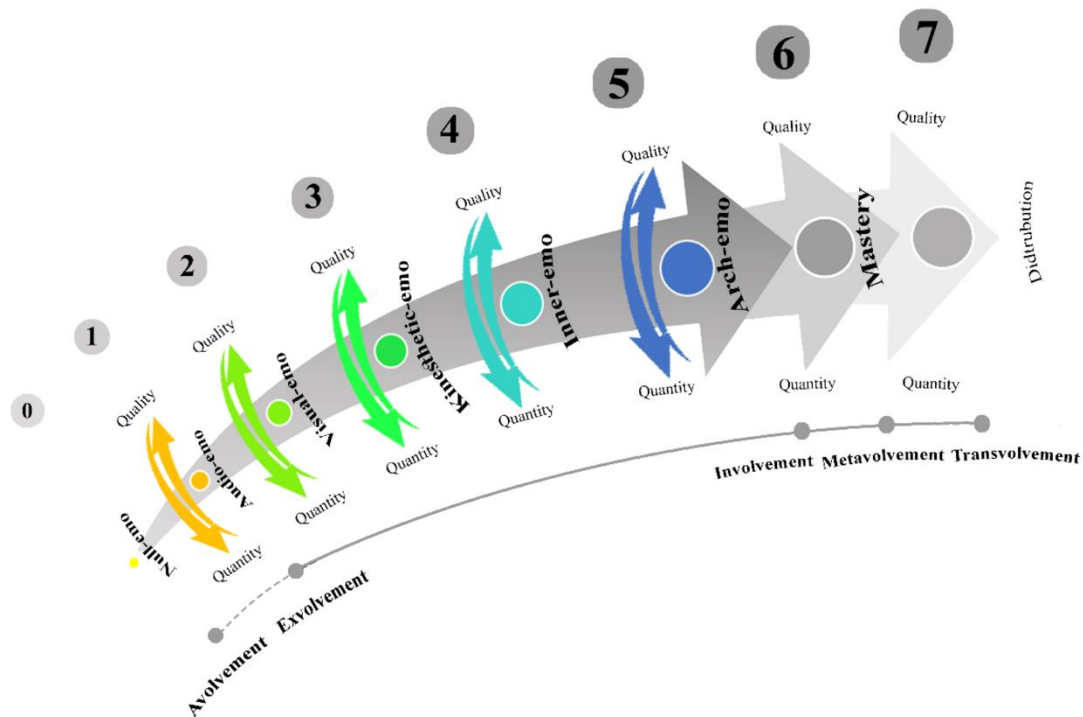
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Refugee education is often studied broadly, focusing more on the diverse experiences and emotional connections across all educational stages, from primary to higher education. This includes both access to education and academic progress. Most support and interventions for individual refugees or families are rare and tend to cover only basic needs without long-term or sustainable planning. This approach overlooks the complicated and unique challenges that come with the complex nature of refugee situations and the varied emotional needs stemming from diverse backgrounds.

In the past decade, researchers have begun to recognise the role of emotion in the educational context, introducing novel concepts like emotioncy. Pishghadam et al. (2013) presented emotioncy as a synthesis of emotion and frequency, focusing on sense-induced emotions and their relationship with cognition. In other words, they explored how often specific sensory experiences, like seeing or hearing, trigger certain emotions and how these emotions affect thinking and learning. Through a series of developmental stages, they introduced avolement, exvovement, involvement, metavovement, and eventually transvovement to the emotioncy matrix (Pishghadam et al., 2022). A visual representation of this matrix can be seen in the following Figure.

**Figure 1**  
*Emotioncy-Based Model Evolution*



The exploration did not end here; Pishghadam et al. (2022) went on to define concern types considering emotioncy, introducing new paradigms such as apathy, sympathy, empathy, metapathy, and transpathy, each representing various levels of concern and engagement (Pishghadam et al., 2022; Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2023).

In refugee education, it is also essential to incorporate the concept of relational affect, defined as the collective emotional dynamics within groups, driven more by shared interactions and principles than individual feelings, emphasising joint behaviour over specific emotions (Slaby, 2019). This dimension is often neglected in conventional social justice theories, like Fraser’s (2008) framework. Lynch’s (2020) work on affective equality and relationships underscored the fundamental importance of emotions and human connections in considerations of justice, introducing essential principles like love, care, and solidarity (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020). However, an existing gap in the literature reveals a lack of focus on how nuanced levels of educators’ concern and engagement—critical elements explored by Pishghadam et al. (2022)—affect the unique educational experiences of refugees. This overlooks the crucial role that emotional considerations and relationships might play in realising equitable and

inclusive educational practices, especially in the intricate context of refugee education (McIntyre & Abrams, 2020). By addressing this gap, there is an opportunity to understand and cater to the emotional and relational dimensions that can enrich the educational experience of those navigating the complexities of displacement and resettlement more fully.

As a refugee scholar resettled in the UK from Afghanistan, I have personally experienced and witnessed the educational challenges faced by refugees, particularly Afghan refugees, and the variations in how politics, governments, organisations, and individuals express their levels of concern towards refugees in various countries. I have observed disparate expressions of welcome and inclusion, even for individuals from similar backgrounds or categories of displacement. These variations have profound implications, often shaping the educational experiences of refugee students.

My observations extend to the inconsistencies in the warmth of welcome and the varying definitions of inclusion that different people harbour. These observations lead me to claim the importance of guiding principles that offer a reflective lens, allowing individuals and institutions to critically assess their approaches to engagement, concern, and justice. Connecting these observations to refugee education, understanding the varying levels of concern and engagement is essential for equitable education. It may also serve as a macro concept that surpasses the educational context. By opening avenues for discussions on justice, equity, welcome, inclusion, and resettlement, this work intends to contribute a nuanced perspective, emphasising the emotional dimension that often remains overshadowed.

In this exploration, I take the position that understanding such complexities requires a deep dive into concepts like emotioncy, concern types, and relational affect. Hence, in this position paper, I use my unique position as a refugee scholar with firsthand experience to investigate how concepts such as emotioncy, concern types, and relational affect relate to refugee education. By exploring this unaddressed area, the paper aims to enrich the dialogue about social justice within this context. The approach extends beyond standard theories, incorporating real experiences and emotional needs and concentrating on the intricate connections between emotions and justice within refugee education. This methodology expands conventional comprehension by viewing these concepts through the social justice lens. Therefore, this paper will delve into essential elements of refugee education, put forward guiding principles, and discuss their implications, obstacles, and insights for educational methods and policies.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Understanding Emotioncy**

Emotioncy, a term introduced by Pishghadam et al. (2013), represents an intersection of emotion and frequency, focussing on sense-induced emotions that influence cognition. In this context, frequency refers to the regularity or how often a particular emotion is evoked by sensory stimuli (Miri & Pishghadam, 2021). The emotioncy concept has been developed and refined in the past ten years through various stages, each illuminating distinct aspects of emotional connection with subjects. Different levels, such as avolvement, exvolvement, and involment, have been identified to depict the relationship between sensory experiences and understanding, providing a foundational framework for engaging with subjects in diverse ways.

Building on this framework, Pishghadam et al. (2022) expanded the concept by introducing the notion of metavolvement. This new addition emphasised the mastery level of engagement, where an individual interacts with a subject and contributes to it in a creative and leading role. Later, continuing to explore and expand the understanding of emotioncy, Pishghadam et al. (2023) further extended the concept by introducing the stage of transvolvement. This latest development includes all previous phases and adds a new aspect of disseminating and distributing the knowledge, innovation, and discoveries they made.

These notions have found applications in diverse educational and language teaching contexts, including the exploration of students' willingness to communicate in teaching (Amini & Weisi, 2023), the examination of motivation and academic success (Zhang, 2021), and the understanding of reading-related anxiety (Tabatabaee Farani et al., 2019). In the following paragraphs, the primary components of emotioncy will be analysed with a particular emphasis on their practical implications within the landscape of refugee education. The following sections will detail these stages, illustrating how they

operate within the context of education, particularly with an emphasis on refugee education. For a clear and concise overview of these stages, refer to Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Emotioncy Stages and Refugee Education*

Stage	Description	Example in Refugee Education
Avolvement	Lack of sensory involvement with a subject.	A student unfamiliar with a topic due to no prior exposure in their new educational system.
Exvolvement	Basic sensory experiences after interacting with the subject.	A student has seen or physically interacted with a national symbol of a foreign country.
Involvement	Engages all senses; includes research and direct experience.	A teacher explores, studies, and investigates pedagogical methodologies for refugee children’s distinct educational needs.
Metavolvement	Engages all senses; includes use, research, and creation within the subject.	A refugee student learns a new language, researches it, uses it, and creates learning materials in that language.
Transvolvement	Mastery level that synthesises previous stages and introduces innovation.	An educator develops a novel teaching approach from previous experiences and shares it with others, representing innovation and dissemination.

*Avolvement:* This stage represents a total lack of sensory involvement with a subject (Pishghadam et al., 2013). In refugee education, avolvement could manifest as a student unfamiliar with a particular topic or concept due to needing exposure to it in their new educational system.

*Exvolvement:* The exvolvement stage involves having heard, seen, or physically interacted with (such as touching, working with, or playing with) the real object (Pishghadam et al., 2020). For example, a student in a foreign country may have seen pictures of a national symbol or physically interacted with a representation of it in class. This stage goes beyond mere awareness and involves essential sensory experiences with the subject.

*Involvement:* The involvement stage goes even further, engaging all senses. It includes not only direct experience but also researching the subject (Pishghadam et al, 2016). A relevant example might be a teacher engaged with refugee children who have personally embarked on exploration, study, and research into the pedagogical methodologies tailored to address their distinct educational needs.

*Metavolvement:* Metavolvement encompasses all senses and includes using, researching, and creating within the subject. This stage could be exemplified by a refugee student who has not only learned a new language but has also researched it, used it in various contexts, and created new learning materials in that language (Miri & Pishghadam, 2021). This engagement with the subject matter is deeper and more comprehensive, involving the creation of new insights or understandings.

*Transvolvement:* The transvolvement stage builds upon all the previous stages, adding the capacity to invent, introduce, or discover innovative ideas in each subject area and to disseminate that information widely (Pishghadam et al, 2023). An educator in a refugee programme who has integrated previous experiences, research, and creativity to develop an entirely novel approach to teaching the subject and then shares this approach with others might exemplify this stage. It represents a mastery level that synthesises previous stages and pushes boundaries, fostering innovation, discovery, and disseminating these ideas in the field.

**2.2. Levels of Concern**

Emotional interactions in education can be deeply complex, particularly in specialised contexts like refugee education (Meyer & Turner, 2006). Pishghadam et al. (2022) offered a critical insight into these complexities by introducing the concept of metapathy. Through the lens of emotioncy, he argued that these emotional interactions could be categorised based on levels of emotioncy, ranging from apathy (indifference) to metapathy (genuine concern for the future).

Metapathy, as introduced by Pishghadam et al. (2022), represents a state beyond empathy, considering the future well-being of an individual. Unlike empathy, which responds to the immediate feeling, metapathy focuses on long-term consequences. While this approach might seem counterintuitive, it aims for the individual's ultimate success. Metapathetic behaviour may not always be appreciated due to its forward-thinking focus, yet it holds potential for societal improvement. Reactions to metapathy can vary across cultures, and understanding this concept can shed light on how emotional concerns are approached in different educational contexts.

Adding to this, Pishghadam et al. (2023) further developed the concept, introducing the layer of transpathy to the model regarding levels of concern. This innovation expanded our understanding of emotional engagement, particularly in specialised educational settings. As we delve into these levels of concern, it is essential to consider how they apply to the context of refugee education. Below, each level of concern is explored, highlighting its unique relevance and implications for refugee learners.

The levels of concern are illustrated concerning the engagement and emotioncy levels in Table 2, as presented by Pishghadam et al. (2023).

**Table 2**  
*Emotioncy-based Levels of Concern*

<b>Thinking</b> \ <b>Feeling</b>	Apathy	Sympathy	Empathy	Metapathy	Transpathy
Disengagement	Aolved				
Underengagement	Exvolved				
Engagement	Involved				
Overengagement	Metavolved				
Extreme Overengagement	Transvolved				

*Apathy:* Apathy reflects a total disengagement with the unique needs and challenges that refugee students might face (Marshall, 2012). In the context of refugee education, apathetic teachers may overlook the specific traumas, cultural adjustments, or educational gaps that refugee students bring into the classroom. This indifference fails to provide an inclusive and supportive educational environment, often leading to a lack of success for these learners.

*Sympathy:* Sympathy in refugee education further acknowledges refugee students' difficulties. However, it stops short of action, offering only verbal acknowledgement without adapting teaching methods or providing additional support. Sympathetic teachers may express concern but not fully engage with the student's unique needs (Corsa, 2021).

*Empathy:* Empathy represents a more profound level of engagement with refugee students (Lee, 2019). Empathetic teachers actively try to understand and respond to refugee students' unique experiences of trauma, displacement, or cultural adaptation. Through this deeper connection, teaching methods may be adapted, and extra support provided to meet their needs, creating a more inclusive and responsive educational setting (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

*Metapathy:* Metapathy takes empathy a step further in the context of refugee education. Metapathetic teachers understand and respond to immediate needs and anticipate and address potential challenges (Pishghadam et al., 2022). This perspective enables the development of forward-thinking interventions, support, and education plans specifically designed for individual refugee students (Arnold et al., 2021). While this long-term approach may initially appear counterintuitive, its goal is to ensure the students' ultimate success, which, in turn, can foster overall societal advancement.

*Transpathy:* Transpathy represents the utmost level of emotional engagement with refugee students (Pishghadam et al., 2023). Transpathic teachers become wholly immersed in understanding and meeting their unique needs. This extreme engagement might lead to over-involvement, reflecting a wholehearted

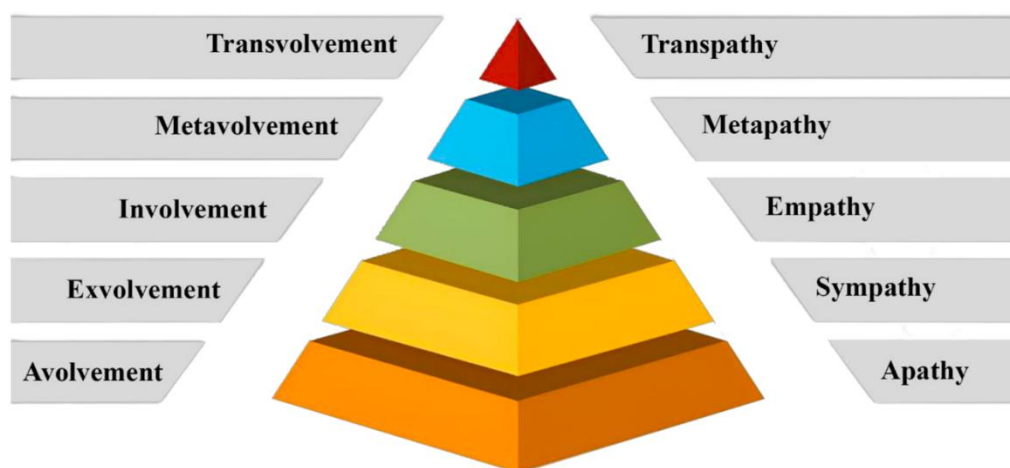


commitment to the students' growth, success, and well-being. Transpathic teachers may become significant advocates for their students, driving change and innovation in refugee education.

By understanding these levels of concern, we can improve our approach to refugee education. This connects to the relational aspect of social justice, which will be covered in the next section. For a more visual representation, refer to Figure 2 by Pishghadam et al. (2023), which graphically depicts the introduced levels of concern.

**Figure 2**

*Emotionency-Based Levels of Concern*



### 2.3. Affective Relations of Social Justice

Fraser's (2008) social justice theory examines the complex barriers that impede social equality. This theory categorises the obstacles into three critical areas that must be addressed to achieve equal participation in society: redistribution, recognition, and representation. In Fraser's work, redistribution refers to the fair sharing of money and resources. It focuses on removing financial obstacles that might prevent equal opportunities, particularly for certain social classes. This can lead to refugees being excluded and segregated due to a lack of resources (McIntyre & Neuhaus, 2021). Fraser (2008) also highlights the importance of recognising or treating people's cultural differences with respect and understanding. This goes beyond money and examines how social status and cultural acceptance are connected. In refugee education, cultural biases can prevent students from being fully recognised for their abilities. Finally, Fraser's (2008) concept of representation ensures that all groups, including non-citizen refugee children, have a say in government decisions. Without this, they might be treated unfairly or not have a say in important decisions that affect their lives.

The three aspects of redistribution, recognition, and representation still need to cover the justice concept fully. Educational social justice extends beyond the equitable allocation of educational resources, although that is crucial. It delves into the educational experience's essence and its long-term societal implications. (Connell, 2012). According to Lynch (2020), justice involves emotional or relational factors. A fourth element, relational affect, emphasises the importance of feelings and relationships in social justice (Lynch, 2012). This aspect, known as affective equality, includes elements like love, care, and solidarity, which focus on personal and emotional connections. Traditional theories of social justice, like Fraser's, may overlook these critical emotional aspects (Cantillon & Lynch, 2017; Lynch et al., 2016).

While Fraser's conceptualisation of social justice offers a comprehensive understanding, Lynch (2012) identified that it lacks a vital element: the emotional connections necessary for genuine fairness and equality. This aspect is particularly significant in refugee education, where love and care are crucial (Green et al., 2021; Lynch, 2020). Schools can function as sanctuaries for recovery, offering stability to young refugees whose lives may be in turmoil (Maadad & Matthews, 2020). However, this approach

presents a challenge as well. If emotional support and affection are not distributed equally, it can create an imbalance in opportunities and responsibilities. This inequity adds to refugee students' difficulties, leading to further inequality (Lynch, 2009). If not appropriately managed, this imbalance can result in the opposite of the belongingness that Dryden-Peterson (2022) emphasises, further separating refugee students from the community and educational environment.

More than simply providing language support is required to address the emotional imbalance and unequal opportunities for refugee students. There is a need for tailored policies, specific guidance, and continuous professional development for educators to cater to the varied emotional requirements of refugee children (Gardner et al., 2021). Kaukko et al. (2021) stress that schools must prioritise the emotional aspects of social justice, highlighting the vital role of love in education. While Kaukko and colleagues (Kaukko et al., 2022; Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020) introduce the term pedagogical love, defined as "co-constructed in the intersubjective domains that constitute the moment-by-moment interactions between students of refugee backgrounds, their teachers and leaders" (Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020, p. 70), in this paper, the term love extends beyond interactions occurring solely within school settings. It encompasses engagements involving educational decision-makers, organisations outside schools, charitable entities, and other relevant authorities. By adopting measures like expanding pedagogical love, strengthening external engagements, prioritising emotional aspects, formulating tailored policies, and promoting educator development, educational institutions can cultivate an environment that supports emotional well-being (Horswood et al., 2019), fosters social integration (Cerna, 2019), enhances academic performance (Wong & Schweitzer, 2017), and builds resilience (White & McCallum, 2021).

### 3. Conceptual Approach

In this position paper, I introduce guiding principles to critically examine interactions with refugees in educational settings, focusing specifically on the level of concern, engagement, and emotional connection, collectively referred to as relational affect. Contemporary discussions in refugee education often employ terms like belonging, safety, warm welcome, inclusion, support, and care. However, every time we use these terms, we must pause and measure our level of concern, engagement, and involvement against the guiding principles presented in this section. This approach encourages us to use these words and explore how they genuinely relate to refugee children's needs and concerns. Doing so fosters a more meaningful dialogue that bridges abstract concepts with concrete understanding and action.

#### 3.1. Neglected Needs: The Consequence of Apathy in Refugee Education

Refugees in educational settings often face severe challenges and crises that may go unnoticed or unacknowledged by policymakers, educators, or the public (Isik-Ercan, 2012). In such cases, essential emotional bonds of appreciation, care, or love might not be provided to the refugee children. This neglect does not mean they are being actively discriminated against. However, the need for more focus on their problems shows a lack of concern by authorities and the public. They do not care to engage or investigate the issue. This lack of interest is apathy (Fahed & Steffens, 2021).

Based on reports from my contacts, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, many living either in camps or private accommodations, have been deprived of education for several months to as long as two years. For example, the Ghazi Amanullah Khan High School in Karachi, serving 430 Afghan refugee students, closed down due to funding issues after the Taliban takeover (Khan, 2023). Distressingly, officials have shown a notable absence of prompt action or foresight, resulting in these children remaining without foundational educational access (Faiez, 2023).

Consider a school with several refugee students who might need specialised support, like language lessons, trauma counselling, or help with cultural integration. If the school administration and local community ignore these unique needs and do not allocate resources or efforts to address them, it demonstrates this lack of relational affect. It is not necessarily intentional disregard but rather a failure to recognise and act on these children's needs. This underscores the need to go beyond mere words like inclusion or support and make a deliberate effort to understand and respond to the unique concerns of refugee students in schools.

The indifference towards refugee students' unique needs reveals a significant gap in current educational policies, practices, and the broader societal approach. This reflects a failure to recognise the complex relationship of emotioncy, concern types, and relational affect. Through the lens of social justice, this apathy is not just a lack of resources but a profound failure to understand and engage with the emotional dimensions of refugee education (Cohen, 2022). Focusing on the complex connections between emotions and justice, this paper aims to shift the focus from mere inclusion or support to a deliberate effort that recognises and responds to the essential elements of refugee education. This perspective offers insights into educational methods and policies, facilitating a transition from apathy to empathetic action and aligning educational practices with principles of social justice for refugee students.

Furthermore, it is crucial to reflect on the ramifications of such apathy. The consequences of lower levels of concern are multifaceted. When refugee children encounter apathy, their lives undergo significant challenges, potentially affecting their mental health, self-worth, and prospects. Their chances of successfully integrating and contributing to their host communities are reduced. On a broader scale, the authorities may face long-term challenges due to this oversight, ranging from social integration issues to potential economic and social difficulties. Ignoring the educational needs of these children now could end in more significant societal challenges in the future. Addressing these concerns with empathy and foresight is not just a moral imperative but a practical necessity.

### **3.2. Empty Promises: The Limitations of Sympathy in Refugee Educational Support**

The sympathy stage refers to a level of concern where individuals, especially decision-makers and those in authority, become conscious of refugee children's struggles. At this stage, the recognition and appreciation of the refugees' difficulties are mostly conveyed through verbal acknowledgement but without any consequent action (Jahoda, 2005). For instance, if a newly arrived refugee child is frustrated with language difficulties at school, such as understanding the local accent or communicating with peers, the authorities may respond with sympathy. They might express understanding and recognise that the situation must be challenging for the child. However, this acknowledgement remains verbal, and no extra support or initiatives are provided to meet the child's needs. While the authorities may assure the child that you will be fine and you will get there one day, their involvement does not extend beyond mere words.

A notable instance is the case of Afghan refugees in various third countries. Despite authorities in different countries being well-informed about the education deficit for these refugees, as communicated through emails and other channels, they merely acknowledged the issue without initiating tangible actions (Cone & Khan, 2023).

Although the sympathy stage signifies progress over absolute apathy, the involvement is still shallow, restricted to surface-level concern without substantial engagement or action. Another applicable example could be when refugee students encounter difficulties adapting to a new curriculum. Teachers and administrators might verbally express sympathy for the students' challenges in adjusting to various teaching methods or content. They may recognise the students' efforts and ensure they understand their struggles. However, their sympathy remains empty if they fail to provide additional tutoring, customised instructional materials, or other tangible support. While it might be an advancement over complete indifference, this sympathy stage still lacks the authentic engagement and active support required to assist refugee students in overcoming their challenges and thriving in their new educational setting.

The concept of empty promises in refugee educational support highlights the limitations of sympathy (Dykstra, 2019). While an advancement over complete indifference, sympathy often remains a superficial acknowledgement without substantial engagement or tangible support (McFarlane, 2003). Though recognising the struggles of refugee children, this stage of concern needs to translate into actionable policies or initiatives to meet their specific needs. Hence, this paper underscores the need to move beyond this restricted level of concern, focussing on a more comprehensive and empathetic approach that aligns with the principles of social justice. By transitioning from mere words of sympathy to actual support, such as additional tutoring or customised materials, the educational system can better respond to refugee students' unique concerns and emotional needs (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2019).



### 3.3. Empathetic Understanding: From Recognition to Active Support

The empathy level represents a further stage of understanding and support towards refugee children, distinguished from mere acknowledgement or sympathy. At this level, the engagement from authorities is more profound, extending beyond mere verbal recognition of a refugee's struggle. They actively attempt to gather more information about the situation and act in a manner that assures the child that every effort is being made to address the issue. There is more excellent care and empathy, with authorities demonstrating through actions that they understand and share the feelings of the refugee child (Zaaidi et al., 2022).

Rumi's quotation, "The heart knows a thousand ways to speak" (as cited in Razfar & Rumenapp, 2013, p. 1), encapsulates the essence of empathy. At the empathy level, the refugee child perceives that the authorities understand and share their feelings and emotions regarding their difficulties. An example of this empathy might be seen in the context of higher education access for a refugee with a bachelor's degree in economics from Afghanistan and seven years of experience working in programme management for an NGO. Suppose this refugee arrives in a European country and seeks to continue their education at a university, only to find that the university's policies do not recognise their degree due to differing accreditation standards. If the authorities merely state the policy and express regret, that would be sympathy. However, empathy would involve an admissions officer recognising the unfairness of the situation and actively seeking to address it. They might attempt to persuade decision-makers to consider the refugee's specific circumstances, exerting efforts to support the individual based on their unique needs and experiences. Even if the result is unsuccessful, the commitment to engagement, involvement, and genuine concern distinguishes this from mere sympathy.

In one instance I observed, the depth of empathy displayed by teachers was truly commendable. A refugee child struggled with cultural assimilation in a new school. One of their teachers went beyond merely recognising the child's struggles and invested time and effort to help the child integrate. They provided one-on-one counselling, additional language lessons, and cultural sensitivity training for classmates. This demonstrated a profound level of empathy. Their commitment to understanding and addressing the child's specific needs, recognising their unique challenges, and accepting and integrating them was evident. At this level, authorities were more engaged, showed more emotions, and put in more effort to support and address the needs of the refugees. They viewed the refugee's situation not as a struggle but a reality, accepting differences without labelling them as good or bad.

The empathy level in refugee education marks a substantial progression towards genuine support beyond mere recognition or sympathy. This stage embodies a commitment to social justice, with authorities actively seeking to understand and share the feelings of refugee children, demonstrating this through tailored actions like one-on-one counselling or cultural sensitivity training (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Central to this commitment is the recognition of epistemic justice (Milligan, 2022). As Fricker (2007, p. 1) defines it, epistemic justice addresses "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower or as an epistemic subject." With this understanding, it is essential to empathise, acknowledge and respect the refugees' knowledge and experiences. Rather than viewing the refugee's situation as a problem, empathy accepts it as a reality, embracing differences without judgment. This approach aligns with the paper's emphasis on connecting emotions and justice in refugee education. By investing in empathetic understanding and addressing the unique emotional needs of refugee students, educational authorities can create a more compassionate and socially just environment. This understanding fosters an educational approach that is not only humane but also grounded in the principles of social justice (Block et al., 2014).

### 3.4. Metapathy: Causes and Personalised Solutions for Long-term Refugee Education

The fourth level of concern type, as described by Pishghadam (2022), is metapathy. Metapathy signifies a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to refugee children's struggles beyond sympathy or empathy. It shares similarities with the metavolvement stage in emotioncy, which entails creation and transformation, focusing on long-term considerations rather than the current or short-term situation. Metapathy extends to various individuals, not limited to authorities or decision-makers; it encompasses educators, community members, caregivers, and others who understand the situation. Those who

operate at this level demonstrate concern and engagement and pursue a more profound and emotional connection with the challenges faced. They endeavour to understand the root causes and reasons behind these struggles, seeking a more analytical grasp. They aim to find ways to offer informed and constructive advice or guidance tailored to their unique circumstances and needs (Glanville, 2019).

Consider a situation where refugee children in a school are consistently underperforming in certain subjects. A teacher operating at the metapathy level would approach this issue with a holistic and long-term perspective (Costa et al., 2021). Recognising and empathising with the children's struggles would only be the starting point. The teacher would then analyse thoroughly to understand the root causes of the underperformance, looking beyond immediate or surface-level factors. This analysis might reveal language barriers, cultural differences, gaps in previous education, or trauma-related issues.

The teacher would look past the immediate situation, considering the long-term effects if these issues are not addressed. They would think about how these factors could continue to impact the children's education in the future. Collaborating actively with other teachers, administrators, counsellors, and community organisations, the teacher would work to design specific interventions and support strategies that address the symptoms and tackle the underlying challenges. This might include specialised language tutoring (Dannenbaum, 2019) that considers future language needs, culturally responsive teaching methods (Walker, 2023) that build on the children's cultural background, or emotional support that considers their long-term well-being. Additionally, connections to community resources (Siah et al., 2023) might be established to understand the refugees' unique present needs and consider their future development and integration. The metapathy approach, in this example, reflects a comprehensive, forward-thinking, and tailored response fully aligned with the refugees' specific circumstances and long-term needs.

Initiatives such as Scholars at Risks or the UK's Sanctuary Scholarship for asylum seekers illustrate the metapathy level. Here, university authorities show more than empathy by offering extended support, reflecting future thinking, care, and inspiration. This goes beyond mere assistance, aligning with the recipients' needs and goals. Similarly, the Warm Welcome Scholarships for Afghan evacuees by the British Council and UK universities display care and inspiration, attuned to the students' challenges and dreams.

Metapathy builds upon the previous characteristics of relational affect found in the levels of sympathy and empathy, such as care, solidarity, recognition, and understanding. It goes further by infusing more hope and inspiration into the approach towards refugee children's struggles. By engaging in a deep and comprehensive understanding of the root causes, collaborating for long-term solutions, and tailoring interventions to individual needs, metapathy offers immediate support and a hopeful and inspiring pathway for future growth and integration.

Metapathy in refugee education aligns with transformative educational theories such as Mezirow's transformative learning (1978) and Freire's critical pedagogy (1970), emphasising a profound shift in understanding. This approach goes beyond addressing immediate needs to encompass comprehensive and long-term empowerment. It reflects the principles of social justice, such as equity, participation, recognition, and empowerment, by engaging various stakeholders to understand underlying challenges and craft individualised, future-focused strategies (WeiQian, 2019). Unlike empathy or sympathy, metapathy connects with theories of critical pedagogy by recognising the individuality and potential of each refugee child, fostering not only educational achievement but also long-term integration and empowerment (Nimer, 2020). This holistic perspective exceeds immediate relief and resonates with broader educational goals, offering a robust pathway to guide future refugee education policy and practice.

### **3.5. Transpathy and Love in Refugee Integration**

Transpathy, as identified by Pishghadam et al. (2023), describes the highest level of empathy and concern. This concept builds on and surpasses sympathy, empathy, and metapathy by incorporating love as the ultimate principle. Love, in the context of refugee education through the lens of transpathy and relational affect, includes not only profound affection and connection but also sacrifice, care, solidarity, and dedication that goes beyond short-term involvement, mirroring hooks' (2006)

characterisation of love as an expression of freedom. Notably, the depth of love conceptualised in the transpathy stage goes beyond the pedagogical love introduced by Kaukko and colleagues (Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2020; Kaukko et al., 2022). While pedagogical love is co-constructed mainly in the interactions within educational settings, love in the transpathy context expands to encompass engagements with decision-makers in education, charitable entities, community stakeholders, and broader societal mechanisms, signifying a more comprehensive and transformative understanding of love in the educational landscape.

Transpathy encourages a deep and lasting commitment to others' success, creating a unified and transformative experience for those providing support, reflecting a sense of relational becoming (Barratt Hacking & Taylor, 2020). It is an approach that extends beyond mere emotional connection, incorporating all aspects of relational affect into a comprehensive and impactful framework.

In transpathy, the level of affection, care, attention, and support equates to a profound love delivered so that the refugee aspires to become like their supporter one day. This drive stems from the tremendous passion and care they are currently receiving. As a hypothetical scenario to illustrate this, imagine a young Afghan refugee in a European country. Upon arrival, they find support from a local choir ensemble despite their unfamiliarity with the language and absence of a musical background. The ensemble's lead recognises the refugee's potential vocal prowess and arranges for bespoke training sessions. Aware of the depth of the refugee's traumatic past, the choir organises a fundraising event. The anticipated funds from this effort are projected to enable the refugee's enrolment in a prestigious musical institution. As this refugee progresses and potentially achieves global recognition as a vocal performer, there is the vision of the refugee embarking on an international concert series, intending to dedicate all proceeds to music education for refugees and for those within conflict-ridden areas. Within the context of transpathy in refugee education, this initiative reflects the deep care and support the refugee has experienced in their new environment. It signifies the peak of empathy and commitment, marked by sustained affection and dedicated assistance.

In the UK's refugee education landscape, the concept of transpathy has been brought to life by charity organisations. The extraordinary commitment shown by volunteers reflects a level of compassion that goes beyond the norm. Some do not just teach language skills; they foster community and connection, creating a sense of empowerment and hope. This approach is representative of transpathy, treating refugees not as outsiders but as integral parts of the community.

Transpathy's application in refugee education represents a progressive shift, aligning with Maslow's theory of self-actualisation (1943) and Freire's critical pedagogy (1970). It recognises the potential for personal growth beyond basic needs and empowers refugees to participate actively in their learning and integration. It is more than academic achievement; it is about nurturing self-worth and comprehensive human development. Implementing transpathy in educational policies can lead to significant changes, creating a setting where refugees are accepted and fully empowered. This incorporation of love or transpathy in refugee education not only enriches the process but also requires a degree of courage, reflecting what hooks (2001) described as essential to living by principles of love.

**Table 2**  
*Concern Levels and Relational Affect in Refugee Education*

Rating	Concern Level	Affective Relational Elements
0	Apathy	- Neglect - Indifference
1	Sympathy	- Recognition - Verbal Acknowledgement
2	Empathy	- Active Engagement - Shared Feelings - Safety - Belonging
3	Metapathy	- Future Thinking - Inspiration - Success
4	Transpathy	- Love

Table 2 illustrates how relational affect and concern levels operate in refugee education, demonstrating that each level is interconnected. It outlines the progression from sympathy, characterised by acknowledgement and verbal engagement, to empathy, marked by shared feelings and active support, to metapathy, which encompasses future thinking, inspiration, and success, culminating in the heightened love and affection found in transpathy.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

This position paper has presented a detailed exploration of the levels of concern theory through the lens of the relational affect of social justice in refugee education. It started with the foundational stages of sympathy and empathy, progressed through the transformative phase of metapathy, and ended in the transformational concept of transpathy. These guiding principles are rooted in understanding refugees' unique struggles and needs, focusing on forging personalised, long-term solutions. Transpathy, characterised by intense love, offers a new and compelling dimension to refugee education. Love and transpathy can be summarised in Saadi Shirazi's poem: "Human beings are members of a whole; in creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain; other members uneasy will remain" (Irvani, 2017, p. 227).

Reflecting on the words of hooks (2009, p. 153), "I want there to be a place in the world where people can engage in one another's differences in a way that is redemptive, full of hope and possibility", emphasises the urgency with which people must address not only the immediate needs of refugees but also engage in a comprehensive understanding of their individual experiences. The goal should be empowering refugees, guiding them beyond sympathy and empathy, and achieving transpathy. This encourages them to foster and extend the same depth of understanding and profound love to others within and beyond their communities. Adopting such an empowering stance not only helps in the holistic development and integration of refugees but also initiates a chain of compassion and deep connection, cultivating an environment full of hope, redemption, and possibility.

This paper offers a clear roadmap for the international community, governments, educational authorities, organisations, and policymakers. It calls for collective responsibility to formulate policies that identify refugees' immediate needs and anticipate future challenges. It demands a shared commitment to celebrating the successes of refugees as an achievement of the global community.

The paper also recommends that researchers invest in empirical and long-term studies to investigate the effectiveness of support provided to refugees. Such research would assess to what extent current interventions remain at the foundational levels of sympathy, empathy, or metapathy. By understanding these dynamics, donors, educators, and policymakers can adapt interventions to deepen emotional investment, making the support more resonant and impactful. It must be stressed that this does not diminish the value of interventions at sympathy, empathy, or metapathy levels. These levels are essential and contribute significantly to the field of refugee education. However, as the principles in this article outline, increasing the intensity of emotional investment may make the support provided more substantial and meaningful.

This article calls for a comprehensive and emotionally invested approach to refugee education. It invites international donors and all stakeholders to deepen their understanding and commitment, guided by a visionary framework that stresses individual empowerment and love. It is an invitation to reflect and act, translating these insights into tangible changes in policy and practice, guided by empirical evidence and long-term research. By embracing this bold vision, there is a real opportunity to create an educational landscape that resonates with the highest ideals of human connection and compassion. It represents not only a strategy for the present but a legacy for the future, one that stands as a testament to what can be achieved when empathy evolves into a deeper, transformative connection. The time for such a vision is now, and the role of love in realising it cannot be overstated.

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