

GLOBAL CLASSROOM FOR GAZA: RECONSTRUCTING EDUCATION AND HOPE FOR PALESTINE

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Abstract

The systematic destruction of educational infrastructure in the Gaza Strip since October 2023 has produced an acute “educide” in which schools, universities, and academic communities have been dismantled, interrupting learning for an entire generation and undermining progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education). This conceptual paper proposes the establishment of a Global Classroom for Gaza as an emergency-to-recovery mechanism to sustain educational continuity and rebuild academic resilience through digitally mediated, internationally supported learning. Using a qualitative synthesis with snowball sampling of core literature on Education in Emergencies, global classroom models, digital transformation in conflict settings, and Gaza-focused scholarship, the study develops a conceptual map that consolidates design requirements into a four-pillar framework. The proposed pillars are: (1) MOOC design grounded in narrative and identity-based learning to support cultural continuity and trauma-informed engagement; (2) connectivity solutions emphasizing low-bandwidth, hybrid, and offline-capable delivery supported by community learning circles; (3) pedagogical strategies that prioritize relational ethics, psychosocial stabilization, and flexible, student-centered learning; and (4) institutional responses that operationalize academic justice through global partnerships, resource mobilization, and recognition/accreditation pathways for credits earned remotely. The paper contributes a fundamental and integrative, implementable framework to guide universities, humanitarian actors, and education authorities in designing “education without walls” under conditions of protracted conflict and infrastructure collapse. It concludes by outlining future empirical validation priorities and governance considerations for scalable deployment.

Keywords: Education in Emergencies (EiE), Educide, Global Classroom, Gaza, Palestine

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INTRODUCTION

Since October 7, 2023, the Gaza Strip has endured a catastrophic humanitarian crisis resulting in a near-total collapse of its essential social and educational infrastructure. This systematic destruction of the academic landscape termed by scholars as "educide" or "scholasticide" profoundly impacts access to and the future of education for Palestinians (Amer, 2024; Iriqat et al., 2025). To counter this unprecedented dismantling of an entire generation's future, this paper proposes the "Global Classroom for Gaza" a conceptual initiative designed to provide immediate digital educational continuity and foster long-term academic resilience (Hassoun et al., 2025). By introducing this framework early, this study affirms its introductory focus with its core conceptual contribution, anchoring this study within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education).

The scale of this crisis highlights the urgency of such an intervention. The death toll of scholars and students, coupled with the widespread destruction of facilities, has effectively severed critical social networks (Baak et al., 2024; El-Khodary & Abou-Dagga, 2025; Khafaji et al., 2025). Deliberate attacks have tragically killed numerous university staff, professors, and university presidents (Deeb & Winegar, 2025; Phipps, 2024), systematically eradicating Palestinian intellectual capital. Multiple sources confirm that all 12 universities in Gaza have been bombed, damaged, or destroyed, including the destruction of the last standing institution, Al-Israa University, on January 17, 2024 (Deeb & Winegar, 2025; Desai, 2024; Khafaji et al., 2025; London et al., 2024). This total collapse deprives more than 90,000 university students of higher education. Within the broader school community, the devastation is equally severe (Hassoun et al., 2025), claiming the lives of 5,479 students, 261 teachers (Baak et al., 2024), and 151 UNRWA workers (Boukari et al., 2024), while leaving over 7,819 students and 756 teachers injured (Baak et al., 2024).

Moving forward, this "de-development" will roll back civilization progress for decades by decimating the infrastructure necessary for a functioning society (London et al., 2024). Even as a precarious ceasefire declared on October 10, 2025 is met with over 2,400 violations and near-daily attacks through April 14, 2026, the ongoing unlawful blockade continues to deprive Palestinians of basic human needs. This creates a stark antithesis between pre-existing national ambitions and the reality of development in reverse, regressing almost every SDG indicator to levels not seen in 20 to 30 years. Consequently, the "Global Classroom for Gaza" serves as an essential mechanism to mitigate scholasticide and protect the fundamental right to education amidst this active crisis (Hassoun et al., 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Classroom

The Global Classroom is traditionally defined as a collaborative, inquiry-based pedagogical model that leverages virtual technologies to foster cross-cultural collaboration and global competencies (Cataline et al., 2024; Wiek et al., 2013). However, in the context of the Gaza Strip where nearly all physical academic infrastructure has been decimated the concept evolves into a vital framework for 'education

without walls' (Aakjær et al., 2024). In this high-intensity context, the Global Classroom acts as a 'peace incubator,' providing a virtual platform for educational continuity, the documentation of at-risk intellectual heritage, and the resistance against 'educide' the systematic destruction of a nation's educational system (Aakjær et al., 2024; Iriqat et al., 2025; McIntosh & Alfaleet, 2014). By dissolving the dichotomy between campus-based and online learning, the Global Classroom serves not only as a tool for distance education but as a symbolic and pragmatic 'home' for learning during periods of total educational collapse (Aakjær et al., 2024; MacKenzie et al., 2021).

This approach allows students to engage with academic content and connect with global educational networks, effectively mitigating the profound impact of physical infrastructure destruction and still enabling continued cognitive growth. This reimagined Global Classroom aligns with the principles of relational rigor, emphasizing the critical role of diverse geo-cultural connections and addressing both virtual and actual challenges to education (Aakjær et al., 2024). This model enables the creation of an anti-fragile educational system capable of withstanding and adapting to ongoing crises, transforming destruction into opportunities for systemic reinvention and locally-driven innovation (Buheji, 2025). Such a framework transcends traditional pedagogical limitations, actively fostering resilience and facilitating the sustained intellectual development of students in protracted conflict zones, thereby countering the deliberate dismantling of educational opportunities (McIntosh & Alfaleet, 2014).

Education in Emergencies (EiE) and Educide in Gaza

Maintaining physical or virtual pathways to schooling despite active displacement Education in Emergencies is a multidisciplinary field that integrates humanitarian assistance and educational interventions to ensure the continuity of learning during crises, conflicts, and natural disasters. However, Education in Emergencies emerged as a distinct subfield in the mid-1990s, defined as a set of programs and interventions designed to ensure access, learning, and protection for children and youth in areas of armed conflict (Burde et al., 2016). According to the Burde et al (2026) EiE can be framed by three primary objectives. First is the access which outline the effort in maintaining physical or virtual pathways to schooling despite active displacement. Second is the learning, which focuses on adapting curricula and teaching methods to the constraints of a crisis environment. Third is the protection, which highlights the classroom as a safe space for psychosocial well-being and physical security. These objectives are inherently interconnected, working synergistically to address both the immediate educational needs and the broader developmental impacts of emergency situations (Akkari & Radhouane, 2023).

While traditional EiE frameworks often focus on rebuilding after incidental damage, the current crisis in Gaza has introduced more severe conceptual frameworks: Educide. Educide can be defined as the systemic dismantling of a nation's educational institutions and institutional infrastructure, aiming to erase intellectual growth and cultural identity (Alhossary & ElMashharawi, 2025; Iriqat et al., 2025). In Gaza, this is evidenced by the destruction of all 12 universities and over 94% of schools, effectively creating a total educational collapse that transcends the standard parameters of "emergency" (Desai, 2024; Hassoun et al., 2025; Iriqat et al., 2025). The systematic targeting of the UNESCO Chair and its partners highlights an attempt to sever the international collaborative links that define Palestinian higher education (Phipps, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach relying on a structured snowballing methodology (Wohlin, 2014) to develop a conceptual synthesis. Rather than a generic qualitative synthesis, this method combines recursive search procedures with thematic synthesis to build a rigorous conceptual framework. The review process was executed in three distinct phases: seed paper identification, forward/backward citation tracking, and thematic screening.

Seed Selection and Database Search Procedures

The process commenced with a purposive database search in Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus to establish a robust foundation of "seed papers." The search string utilized was: ("education in emergencies" OR "EiE") AND ("global classroom" OR "remote learning") AND ("Gaza" OR "conflict zone") The inclusion criteria targeted peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports (e.g., UNRWA, UNESCO), and book chapters published between October 2023 and April 2026 to capture both foundational education-in-emergencies theories and the live realities of the current crisis. A total of five highly relevant seed papers addressing informal learning environments for displaced children and scholasticide were selected.

Snowballing and Screening Process

From these seed papers, a backward citation search was conducted to trace foundational theories and historical precedents of educational infrastructure destruction. Concurrently, a forward citation search tracked emerging applications and recent developments (Phusavat & Buheji, 2024). To ensure data integrity, candidate articles were subjected to a two-stage screening process: first, an abstract review for contextual relevance to active conflict zones, followed by a full-text appraisal. Articles focusing purely on standard commercial distance-education or stable-state e-learning were excluded. This dual-directional approach yielded the core literature mapping the phenomenon of "educide" or "scholasticide" in protracted, extreme contexts (Iriqat et al., 2025).

Conceptual Mapping and Reflexivity Management

The gathered data were analyzed using conceptual mapping to categorize literature-derived insights into a structural framework consisting of four key pillars: Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) design, connectivity solutions, pedagogical strategies, and institutional responses. To manage researcher subjectivity and ensure interpretive validity during this synthesis, a reflexive thematic analysis approach was employed. The construction of the four pillars was not predefined, but rather emerged inductively through recursive constant comparison across the text segments. Subjectivity was actively minimized by cross-verifying extracted themes against independent international data frameworks (such as the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE] standards) and through collaborative peer debriefing among the research team to ensure the categorization remained

grounded in the source texts rather than personal bias.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the reviewed literature provides a foundational architecture for operationalizing an "antifragile" educational system within active conflict zones. While standard resilient systems merely absorb shock and return to a baseline state, an *antifragile* education system actively adapts, learns, and builds localized capacity out of structural disruption (Hostettler et al., 2018; Salha et al., 2024; Tarricone et al., 2021). This framework counters "educide" by shifting education from a static physical dependency to a decentralized digital network, modeling extensions from digital crisis migrations observed in regional contexts like An-Najah National University (Al-Shaer et al., 2025). The proposed "Global Classroom for Gaza" achieves this by anchoring remote learning within four distinct operational pillars.

Table 1: The proposed four pillars for the Global Classroom

Pillar	Design Strategy	Focus	Conceptual Foundation/ Inspiration
MOOC Design	Narrative/Identity-based	Cultural Resistance	Grounded in <i>Discover Palestine</i> model (Affouneh et al., 2018)
Connectivity	Low-bandwidth/Hybrid	Operational Resilience	Inspired by crisis e-learning agility (Abusamra et al., 2022; Dridi et al., 2020)
Pedagogy	Peace Incubator/Relational	Psychosocial Stabilization	Built on virtual exchange paradigms (Aakjær et al., 2024; McIntosh & Alfaleet, 2014)
Institutional	Solidarity/Justice-based	Systemic KnowContinuity	Extended from institutional emergency aid (Khafaji et al., 2025; Shakir et al., 2025)

Pillar 1: MOOC Design and Sovereign Narratives

To maximize analytical clarity, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) design must be conceptually differentiated into two distinct operational targets: sovereign narrative reclamation and trauma-informed pedagogy. First, rather than adopting traditional Western models of content delivery, MOOC design in the Palestinian context acts as a mechanism for cultural preservation and narrative sovereignty. As demonstrated by the *Discover Palestine* model, open courses can be designed to directly integrate local history and national education across all learning levels (Affouneh et al., 2018), acting as a counter-measure to the systemic erasure of indigenous knowledge systems, or scholasticide (Iriqat et al., 2025; Phipps, 2024).

Second, this sovereign content must be structurally paired with trauma-informed delivery. This involves integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles specifically offering multiple means of engagement and expression to accommodate the fragmented attention spans and emotional distress of displaced learners (Imbesi et al., 2023). By maintaining a strong instructional "teacher presence," the platform evolves from a passive repository of videos into a collaborative space for situated cognition, where mentors guide students to process global academic concepts through the lens of their lived local

realities (Affouneh et al., 2018; Phusavat & Buheji, 2024).

Pillar 2: Operational Connectivity and Human Infrastructure

The primary barrier to executing a Global Classroom in Gaza is the systematic "de-development" of physical telecommunications infrastructure (London et al., 2024). To achieve true operational resilience, this framework explicitly moves away from high-bandwidth, synchronous ideals, drawing functional inspiration from how regional universities adapted to emergency transitions during acute crises (Abusamra et al., 2022).

Operationally, low-bandwidth resilience is defined here as a system engineered to run on a data-frugal footprint. This involves three sequential technical phases:

1. Asynchronous caching: Relying on compressed, pre-downloadable modular packages.
2. Decentralized open access: Utilizing lightweight, open-source e-libraries and text-based databases (Affouneh et al., 2018).
3. Phased infrastructure restoration: Scaling toward synchronous communication only as local physical grid connectivity stabilizes (Bajger et al., 2025).

Where physical networks fail entirely, this framework implements "human connectivity as infrastructure." Moving past a purely metaphorical concept, this is operationally defined as the mobilization of localized, physical learning circles small cohorts of displaced students meeting in safe geographic pockets (Aakjær et al., 2024). Inspired by the tutor-student rapport and peer coping mechanisms observed in resource-strained refugee camps (Dridi et al., 2020), these circles leverage human peer-to-peer relationships to maintain educational momentum, substituting social capital for missing digital infrastructure.

Pillar 3: Pedagogical Strategies as Sanctuary

Under extreme conflict conditions, pedagogy must pivot from traditional performance assessment to psychological survival and stabilization (Shay & Pohan, 2021). By prioritizing "relational ethics" valuing consistent teacher-student connection above rigid assignment deadlines the virtual classroom functions as a "symbolic home" for displaced scholars.

This model introduces virtual exchange mechanisms that serve as "peace incubators" (McIntosh & Alfaleet, 2014). By facilitating shared cross-border academic inquiry between international students and Gazan peers, these spaces humanize the localized conflict experience while fostering cross-cultural solidarity (Grant, 2006). To implement these highly flexible curriculum designs, however, international partnerships must invest heavily in professional development, training global educators in active digital literacy and trauma-informed support (Clum et al., 2022; Grace, 2025)

Pillar 4: Institutional Responses and Justice-Based Solidarity

The final pillar requires a transition from passive global observation to active academic justice. Palestinian educational authorities must maintain centralized command and control over the Global Classroom's coordination to protect local educational sovereignty. Concurrently, international higher

education networks must provide structural mechanisms for academic continuity (Pherali & Lewis, 2019; Shakir et al., 2025).

This response translates into concrete actions: funding emergency remote-teaching equipment for displaced faculty through initiatives like the ISNAD program (Shakir et al., 2025), and granting "digital asylum" to students (Jebril, 2024). Under a digital asylum framework, international universities host Gazan students on remote platforms while guaranteeing global credit recognition and enrollment pathways, preserving the critical link between higher education and future national development (Habib, 2023; Jebril, 2024).

Practical Constraints and Framework Limitations

While the Global Classroom provides a foundational conceptual blueprint, its implementation faces stark operational boundaries in active conflict zone. First, considering the total blackout constraint during the war. If internet, cellular networks, and electricity grids are entirely severed by military action, digital asylum and asynchronous caching become functionally impossible. The framework then rests entirely on physical, offline learning circles, which are highly vulnerable to kinetic military threats.

Second, the assesment-accreditation coordination. Balancing a "relational pedagogy" that relaxes standard testing with the strict bureaucratic requirements of international university accreditation presents a significant institutional paradox. If global partners do not actively adapt their institutional policies, credits earned under crisis-adapted models may fail to achieve long-term transferability. Third, human capacity under burnout and trauma. Global educators volunteering for these platforms face immense secondary trauma, while surviving local faculty are dealing with direct physical displacements. The model's reliance on human infrastructure assumes an emotional and physical bandwidth that may be unsustainable over protracted timelines without systemic support mechanisms.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should focus on the empirical validations and refinement of the four pillars proposed in this framework; MOOC design, connectivity, pedagogy and institutional reponse to ensure their practicality and doability under the extreme conditions of educide and what is left from the war. To gain deeper qualitative insights, focus groups should be conducted with key stakeholders, including displaced Gazan academics, parents, students that are currently navigating the academic displacement and even IT specialist experienced in managing digital infrastructure in conflict zones. This qualitative approach should be complemented by quantitative studies assessing the impact of these interventions on academic outcomes, psychological well-being, and long-term career trajectories of Palestinian students. Additionally, such studies are necessary to assess the feasibility of these digital interventions given that 94.7% of Gaza's schools and all its universities have been severely damaged or destroyed (Desai, 2024; Hassoun et al., 2025). Furthermore, longitudinal research is needed to explore the "relational ethics" of these global learning circles and their long-term impact on student resilience and psychosocial stabilization. Investigating how international accreditation bodies can formalize credits earned through these "Global Classrooms" will also be critical to preventing a "lost generation" and

supporting the eventual reconstruction of the Palestinian higher education system (Jebril, 2024; Shakir et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The proposed "Global Classroom for Gaza" model represents a structural transition from ad-hoc emergency education responses toward a decentralized, borderless learning framework capable of bypassing the physical disruptions of active conflict. Empirically, this initiative offers a paradigm shift toward an antifragile educational ecosystem designed to systematically safeguard the intellectual capital and institutional heritage of Palestinian higher education. When physical campus infrastructures are completely dismantled, institutional survival depends on migrating academic assets to cloud-based networks and mobilizing transnational scholarly cooperatives.

By structurally aligning low-bandwidth technical solutions with trauma-informed relational pedagogies, this framework demonstrates that institutional continuity is independent of localized physical structures. Instead, education operates as a decentralized mechanism for national identity preservation and intellectual sovereignty, sustained through international institutional solidarity. This "education without walls" approach does not merely serve as a passive post-conflict recovery plan; rather, it functions as an active strategy for continuous human capital preservation during ongoing crises. Ultimately, the systematic reconstruction of conflict-affected higher education sectors cannot be delayed until physical stabilization occurs; instead, it must commence immediately through the strategic deployment of global digital integration and transnational academic networks that refuse to let an entire generation be excluded from the global knowledge economy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

A.S.A. Fadzil: Conceptualization; Methodology; Writing, original draft; Project administration; Visualisation.

N.I. Mohsin: Investigation; Data curation; Resources; Writing, review & editing.

N.Z.N. Abashri: Investigation; Data curation; Resources; Writing, review & editing.

A.M. Rahmat: Formal analysis; Validation; Writing – original draft (Discussion); Writing, review &

editing.

M.Z.H.A. Jalal: Formal analysis; Validation; Writing – original draft (Discussion); Writing, review & editing.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Not applicable.

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