

Buad Kholes, Arianna Taddei, Catia Giaconi

INCLUDING JERUSALEM

Educational Justice, Inclusion,
and Community Resilience



XXV

LA SOCIETÀ FORMATIVA
Collana di studi e problemi di Pedagogia Sociale

fondata da

UMBERTO MARGIOTTA †

diretta da

IVANA PADOAN E RITA MINELLO

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This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Buad Khales, Arianna Taddei, Catia Giaconi, AQU University, University of Macerata, EducAid and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.



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EducAid
SOCIAL INNOVATION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The research was conducted within the framework of the project “Including Jerusalem: Promoting Inclusion as a Unifying Process for Primary School Children in Fragmented Communities of East Jerusalem” (ENI 431-785), implemented by EducAid and funded by the European Union between 2022 and 2026.

ISBN volume 979-12-5568-535-7
ISSN collana 2284-3000

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73100 Lecce • Via Arturo Maria Caprioli, 8 • Tel. 0832.230435
www.pensamultimedia.it

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Chapter 6

Research Premises and Aims

*Tommaso Santilli, Nihad Majeed Abu Irmeleh,
Maisa' Issa Khalil Abu-Nimah, Shaima' Abdalkareem Ali, Ilaria D'Angelo,
Sawsan Victor Istephan, Buad Khales, Arianna Taddei*

1. Foreword

This section discusses the field research carried out within the Including Jerusalem Project. As outlined in the Introduction to this volume, and as evident from the contributions presented in the previous sections, the inter-university collaboration that gave rise to the Project takes place within a territorial context characterised by the intersection of multiple geographical, political, and cultural barriers, which have a profound impact on the well-being and Quality of Life (Giaconi, 2015; Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2002, 2006) of local communities.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory, comprising the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, is marked by profound political and administrative fragmentation that significantly influences the social, relational, and educational dynamics of the resident population (Abu-Nimah et al., 2025; Pacetti et al., 2024; Taddei et al., 2025; Taddei & Pacetti, 2018). These divisions have created a systemic separation that restricts freedom of movement, limits access to essential services, and affects the daily lives and social cohesion of Palestinian communities, shaping a constantly evolving geography of barriers (MacKenzie et al., 2020; Moghli, 2024). In this context, implementing inclusive education involves a closer examination of the material and immaterial factors that influence opportunities for participation and the Quality of Life of affected communities (Giaconi & Del Bianco, 2025). As outlined in the previous Chapters, physical barriers and political restrictions directly impact access to education and the continuity of educational pathways. In particular, mobility restrictions – e.g. checkpoints, roadblocks, and separation in-

frastructure – not only hinder daily school commutes but also undermine the construction and maintenance of stable and cohesive educational communities (MacKenzie et al., 2020; Miaari & Lee, 2024; Samman, 2020).

Exacerbating these difficulties is the impact of the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which further destabilises the education system and undermines its ability to ensure continuity and security. Frequent disruptions to teaching, together with organisational and interpersonal difficulties, affect teaching quality, learning processes, and relationship stability between students, teachers, and families. Schools thus find themselves operating under intense structural and social pressures, and are called upon to extend their functions beyond mere teaching to address social and community care amid instability (OECD, 2024; Pacetti et al., 2024).

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the right to education must be interpreted as a fundamental human right. This is realised through 4 closely interlinked dimensions: availability of educational services, accessibility, quality of learning experience, and the education system's adaptive capacity in response to students' needs and contextual challenges (Tomaševski, 2001). From this perspective, an inclusive approach to teaching and education represents a paradigm through which these dimensions can be effectively pursued, promoting the removal of barriers to participation, the valorisation of diversity, and the transformation of school cultures, policies, and practices (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2005). Indeed, such a pedagogical approach makes it possible to translate the principle of equity into flexible teaching practices, allowing for the recognition of and response to discontinuities in students' educational pathways, varying resource availability, and challenging socio-emotional circumstances. As Khaless highlights (see Chapter 1 of this volume), inclusive education takes on a profoundly transformative role, acting as a tool to safeguard the right to education and rebuild safe learning environments in conditions of prolonged emergency. This involves deliberate efforts to enhance the relational and community-based aspects of the school, with a view to supporting the well-being and participation of community members. From this perspective, the empowerment of teachers, students, and families is a guiding principle by which schools can develop resilience and continue to fulfil their educational mandate despite constraints imposed by the context. For this to be possible, however, the right to education must be viewed not as an abstract principle, but as a fundamental human right that must be effectively implemented even in the most vulnerable contexts, guiding the design of education systems that are genuinely accessible, equitable, and capable of meeting students' needs.

2. Research Objectives and Research Questions

In light of the above, the inter-university collaborative research conducted within the framework of the Including Jerusalem Project, carried out by the University of Macerata in partnership with Al-Quds University, was designed to investigate existing pedagogical practices and the ways in which schools, families, and local communities collaborate to sustain inclusive education in contexts affected by protracted conflict.

The aim is not merely to describe the effects of the crisis on educational processes, but to understand how schools, teachers, families, and local communities strive to preserve continuity of learning, while fostering participation and inclusion, despite the profound constraints imposed by the context. In doing so, the study seeks to identify the relational, pedagogical, and organisational resources that enable educational systems to remain responsive to students' needs, even under conditions of protracted adversity. By examining both enabling factors and persistent barriers, the Project aims to generate evidence capable of informing context-sensitive educational policies and practices. Ultimately, the findings are intended to support the development of highly contextualised and transformative educational processes responsive to specific local educational settings, fostering equity, active citizenship, social cohesion, and social justice while strengthening inclusive educational pathways for all students (INEE, 2010, 2018; Taddei, 2010, 2021).

To this end, as discussed in the following chapter, the study adopts a participatory approach aimed at recognising and valuing the practices, knowledge, and resources developed by educational communities. These are understood as essential foundations for informing the design of transformative educational processes that are deeply contextualised and responsive to the specific characteristics of local settings, while promoting equity, active citizenship, and social justice (Taddei, 2010; Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2018; Taddei, 2021).

Consistent with these objectives, the study adopts the Palestinian educational ecosystem as its unit of analysis and considers the institutional, pedagogical, and community dimensions that collectively shape school life. The research design encompasses multiple educational stakeholders – including school principals, general education teachers, specialist education teachers, students of varying educational levels and socio-cultural backgrounds, and their families – recognising that each contributes to inclusive educational practice. The sampling strategy was designed to capture the diversity of educational experience across participating

schools, ensuring variation in educational pathways, the inclusion of students with diverse educational needs, and a balanced gender distribution.

The study was designed around a set of research questions that reflect the main theoretical dimensions discussed throughout this volume. Building on a collaborative research process, the Italian and Palestinian research teams jointly identified the following research questions:

- RQ1: *What are the practices realised by the community in emergency situations to guarantee equal learning opportunities?*
- RQ2: *What does the right to education mean in these situations?*
- RQ3: *What does inclusion mean in these situations?*
- RQ4: *How is well-being addressed in these situations?*
- RQ5: *Which competences are strategic for teachers in emergency situations?*

Collectively, these research questions investigate relevant dimensions underpinning inclusive education in emergency contexts. Specifically, they examine the following: educational practices adopted by school communities; meanings attributed to the right to education, inclusion, and well-being; and professional competences considered essential for teachers working in contexts characterised by protracted conflict and disruption to education. This design follows a progressive analytical logic, moving from identifying practices implemented by key stakeholders to exploring their perspectives, interpretations, and understandings of the study's core themes. Finally, the inquiry focuses on identifying the strategic competences and resources necessary to support teachers and schools to respond effectively to the challenges of education provision in emergency contexts and to foster inclusive and resilient educational systems.

Building on these premises and research objectives, the following Chapters present the study's methodological framework, the research instruments employed, the data analysis procedures, and the discussion of the obtained findings.

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Including Jerusalem. Educational Justice, Inclusion, and Community Resilience presents a pedagogical research and international cooperation initiative promoted by EducAid NGO, aimed at promoting inclusive educational processes in primary schools in East Jerusalem and surrounding areas within the Including Jerusalem project. The initiative seeks to advance the right to inclusive and quality education in a context of protracted emergency, fostering dialogue between research, educational communities, and context-responsive practices. The volume approaches inclusion as a pedagogical paradigm through which the relationships between rights, participation, social justice, and Quality of Life can be critically explored, recognising schools and educational communities as key settings for fostering individual and collective resilience, belonging, and opportunities for the future. Drawing on the perspectives of researchers, school leaders, teachers, students, and families, the book captures the complexity of the Palestinian experience and highlights practices, professional competences, and community resources that can sustain inclusive processes even in conditions of profound vulnerability. The volume is addressed to those working in education, international cooperation, and pedagogical research, offering a context-sensitive perspective on inclusive education in emergencies and contributing to the international debate on inclusion, educational justice, and community resilience.

