

Addressing the educational gap in Palestine: Reasons, solutions, and compensatory measures

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Abstract

Palestinian Education System: Education in Palestine the education system in Palestine represents a big challenge; some of the explanations given for this are conflict, economic challenges between the two, not having enough resources and the fact that teaching methods are outdated. It means that disputes and financial difficulties make providing quality education at that level almost impossible. Resources are in short supply - from the basic deficits of school buildings, learning materials, and trained teachers. These outdated curricula are being taught here; Solutions should come from all sides to correct the situation. Education must start with the participation of local communities—reform teacher training programs. Capital is needed to construct better schools. Policy change can also help address some of the systemic problems. Finally, extraordinary efforts are required to assist students in making up for lost learning. Such needs include access to job skills training, online education platforms, academic tutoring programs, or scholarship opportunities.

Keywords: Palestine; Educational Gap; Conflict; Socioeconomic Disparities; Infrastructure Challenges; Policy Reforms; Community Engagement.

1. Introduction

Education is certainly the hallmark of societal advancement and economic prosperity, and it is a source of optimism and innovation (Smith and Jones, 2023). In Palestine, a country rife with complexity in almost every way, education is even more essential to make and shape the individual and the nation that will be one day. The introduction introduces the context surrounding the idea that education has a transformative potential in, among others, social cohesion, economic development, and general well-being. However, there are still vast disparities in the Palestinian Education Landscape due to the heterogeneities across the regions and demographic groups with which nature stands, both regional and demographical (Brown et al., 2022; Johnson, 2021). Background Palestine has a myriad of educational disparities and systems varying concerning access and quality. These disparities are worsened by political unrest, economic challenges and refugee situations experienced by marginalized communities, which affect women and children the most (Johnson, 2021). The unequal availability of educational resources, including learning material and educational infrastructure, further exacerbates the gap for Palestinian students and acts as a barrier to school advancement.

1.1. Question of the Study

How can the problems that Palestine's education system faces—such as armed conflict, unstable economic conditions, a lack of resources, and antiquated teaching techniques—be successfully addressed to guarantee that every student receives a high-quality education?

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1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Palestinian educational system needs help with many problems, mainly the ongoing conflict, the shortage of resources, economic and bureaucratic restrictions, and the traditional outmodedness of teaching. These are more complex problems to fix, making delivering quality education incredibly challenging. Issues like insufficient educational resources, trained lecturers, and school infrastructure perpetuate the matter. Old-fashioned programs of study also delay education reform. Of course, these complexities demand comprehensive solutions. It includes policy reforms, improving teacher preparation, improving school infrastructure, promoting community involvement, etc. In addition, tailored interventions, such as digital learning tools, academic recovery services, and career and scholarship resources, are necessary to help students advance.

2. Reasons for the Educational Gap

In this section, we investigate why such an educational disparity exists in Palestine by addressing the root causes and intertwining factors contributing to various outcomes, qualities, and area-based implementations. Among the primary reasons responsible for the educational disparity in the Rose territories, Ghannam (2013) stated that the political unrest and occupation of Palestine greatly address the challenges to the availability, utilization and absorptive capacities of its academic resources and infrastructure. Political uncertainty disrupts the learning environment and resource scarcity, which prevents long-term planning for the sustainable development of Education: Khalidi (2022).

Socioeconomic differences also increase the educational gap. Poverty and high unemployment rates result from financial difficulties that constrain the family's construction of Education due to differences in access to good schools, educational resources, and availability to extracurricular activities (Abu-Lughod and Dabashi, 2021). The first is the limited educational infrastructure, which includes old buildings, the most overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient digital infrastructure (Nasser, 2020). Additionally, these infrastructure limitations fall heavily on marginalized and rural communities, contributing to educational inequity.

2.1. Political Factors

The impact of long years of hostilities and occupation of Palestine is visible in many areas of life, including education. Political turmoil and occupation, meanwhile, have a significant effect on educational opportunities, recourses and infrastructure for Palestinian students. Prolonged conflicts and dispossession have led to a cumulative impact of the now over fifteen years of waves of school closures, damage to buildings and facility infrastructure, and access to educational resources, and this has left many gaps on the recipient side (Ahmed et al., 2023). Curfews, Checkpoints, and Military Presence Impacting School Attendance and Laboratory Work According to Barghouthi (2022), curfews, checkpoints, and the military presence create numerous challenges for teachers and students; they disrupt the regular attendance at schools and laboratory work.

The political climate encourages instability and ambiguity, discouraging investments in educational infrastructure and preventing long-term planning for education development (Khalil and Hamdan, 2021). In conflict-affected areas, resource allocation toward developing education infrastructure can arrest vital resources to satisfy immediate needs, causing schools to be under-resourced with poor schooling environments.

2.2. Socioeconomic Disparities

The educational gap in Palestine is largely caused by economic hardships, poverty, and high unemployment rates, which erect obstacles that prevent some people from accessing education and exacerbate inequality between various socioeconomic groups. Families are frequently compelled to put immediate needs ahead of investing in education due to the prevalence of economic hardships, which include low household incomes and limited financial resources (Farraj and Salem, 2023). Because of this, many kids from low-income families struggle to get a good education because they do not have enough money for supplies, uniforms, or school fees.

Poverty is a widespread problem that affects children's general well-being and educational outcomes by intersecting with educational disparities (Hijazi and Qasrawi, 2022). The academic challenges that marginalized communities face are exacerbated by poor living conditions, inadequate nutrition, and restricted access to healthcare services, which can have an impact on their academic performance and cognitive development.

The cycle of poverty and educational inequality is exacerbated by high unemployment rates, especially among youth and young adults (Ziadeh and Barakat, 2021). Economic instability and a lack of job opportunities discourage families

from investing in their children's education and cause people to stop attending formal education to support their families.

2.3. Infrastructure Challenges

Such a lack of resources, coupled with movement restrictions and insufficient schools, significantly hinders access to quality education in Palestine. It adds to the existing knowledge gaps and inequities among the different segments of the population.

The low availability of high-quality school facilities, for instance, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sanitary facilities, in which students learn is a significant limitation of the learning setting and the general educational environment of Palestinian students in their schools (Hammad and Abu-Nada, 2023). There needs to be more furniture, crowded classrooms, and outdated amenities that affect many schools, all of which are detrimental to the learning and teaching of students.

Moreover, education in Palestine is additionally limited by resource constraints, including technology, instructional material, and textbooks (Soboh et al., 2022). Outdated or insufficient learning materials Subject all students to the same poor-quality teaching. For example, Schools in disadvantaged communities may need more access to interactive, relevant methods and materials that prepare pupils for life in the 21st Century.

Moreover, the movement restrictions due to checkpoints and barriers and the travel restrictions from/to conflict-affected residents to/from crossing points or barriers have a major impact on the student's access to the school, regular attendance, and participation in the extra-curricular activities (Makhlouf and Abdel Jawad, 2021). Transportation: Problems with transportation cause teachers and students to be absent more often and disrupt lessons.

2.4. Curriculum and Pedagogical Issues

Little is omitted from the standard curriculum, resulting in outdated teaching methods and a disconnection between educational offerings and modern needs. These are detrimental to learning and amplify the learning gap in Palestine; this speaks to the need for pedagogical innovation and redesign of curricula.

Students are also impeded in acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills demanded by the modern workforce because their curriculum is not in line with global standards and contemporary needs (Saleh and Al-Hajj, 2023). Outdated curricula place insufficient, if any, priority on developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy to prepare students for twenty-first-century challenges.

Curriculum content and outdated teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches impede the effectiveness of learning experiences (Abu-Orabi and Ismail, 2022). Palestinian students memorize a cramped, teacher-centred education that leaves little room for student involvement and does not offer any space for creativity, teamwork, or lifelong learning skills.

Educational disparities include technology integration, vocational education, and inclusive practices (Farah and Issa, 2021). Inclusive education strategies, innovative pedagogy training, and even learning materials can only be developed with these resources.

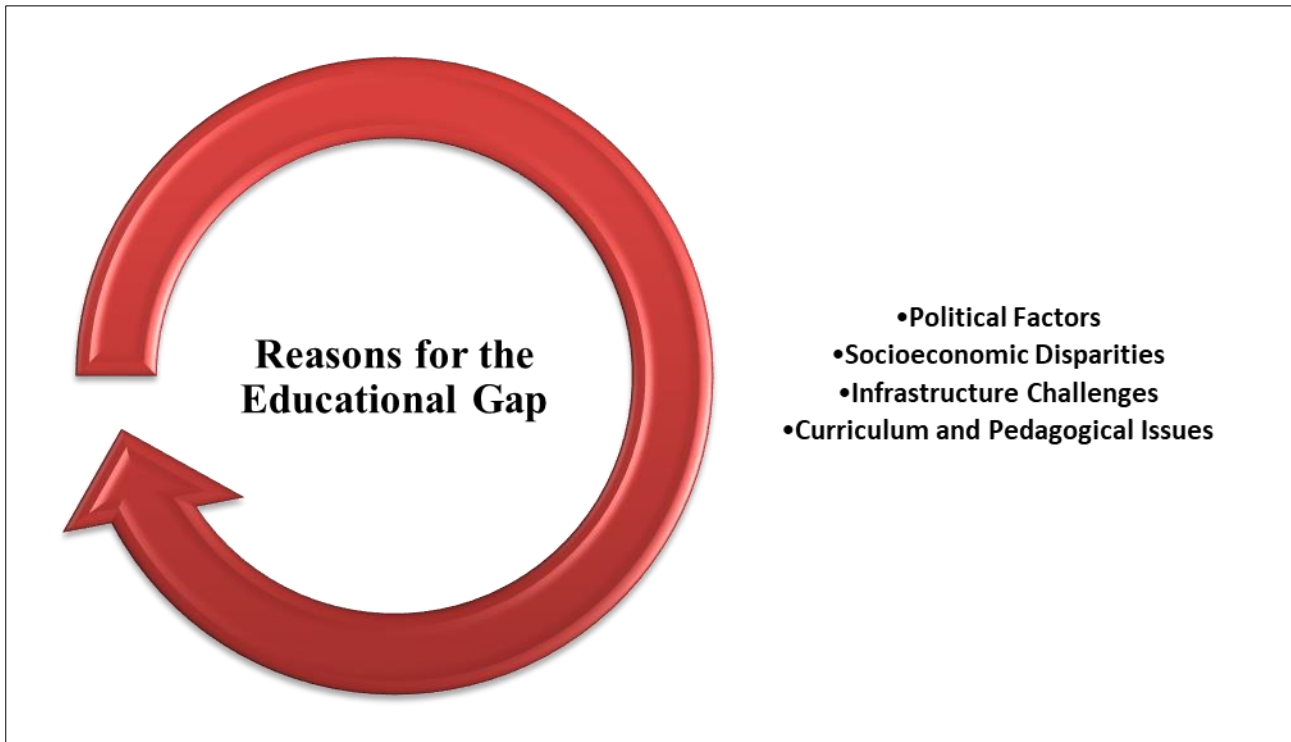


Figure 1 Reasons for the Educational Gap

3. Solutions to Bridge the Gap

Creative solutions, community engagement, and policy interventions to address the educational gap in Palestine are documented to secure equitable access to high-quality education for all.

Implementing policy interventions is key to tackling systemic educational issues and advancing inclusive practices. The new interventions involve increasing spending on education, revising the design of educational policies to make them more appropriate and practical, and introducing measures of accountability so that we can reasonably be confident that resources are being put to good use (Salman and Al-Hroub, 2023).

However, initial volunteering and stakeholder engagement are essential to creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment. For example, parental education programmes, mentorship opportunities, and community-based learning centres may mitigate the factors that affect educational achievement when combined with the engagement of schools, families, civil society organizations, and local communities (Abu-Rabia, 2022).

According to Jadalla et al. In this same way, in the 21st century (2021), cutting-edge methods, such as competency-based education, project-based learning, and digital learning initiatives, can disrupt the nature of education and the processes through which we can implement and deploy learning frameworks. This method can handle most learning requirements and stimulate students to think critically and creatively. In short, education gaps can be closed, and students can be prepared for the digital age if teachers integrate technology, provide online tools, and promote digital literacy.

3.1. Policy Reforms

In order to narrow Palestine's educational gap and foster inclusion and quality education in its policy reforms, special attention must be paid to strengthening education policies, financial support, curricula, and the sound governance of external assistance.

Education policies must be reformed to meet current educational demands and comply with worldwide best practices (AlyanBot, 2023). This might require revising curriculum frameworks, modifying assessment procedures, and incorporating relevant, culture-sensitive content to infuse holistic imparting of education.

Sabbah and Matar (2022) argued that more educational funding is needed to create equitable access to good educational opportunities. More funds can be used to train teachers, provide educational materials, improve infrastructure, and provide support services to marginalized students to reduce educational disparities.

Educational content has to be comprehensive, fun, and updated, which can be achieved by reviewing the curriculum (Farah and Qasim, 2021). The Palestinian perspective—alongside several others—can thus play a central role in making learning more relevant and effective in Palestine by instilling a culture of diversity, tolerance, and 21st-century skills into the curricula.

3.2. Infrastructure Development

Investing in modern school buildings, technology integration, and transportation networks to address and fix the major infrastructural hindrances to educational accessibility and quality in Palestine and overcome the apparent educational gap remains costly.

Modernizing school facilities includes transforming classrooms, libraries, labs, and leisure spaces into learning-friendly environments (Khalil et al.). Not only does modernizing infrastructure support the comfort and safety of teachers and students, but it also provides a platform for innovative teaching practices and educational opportunities.

Based on Salem and Abu-Hammad (2022), technology in the classroom is essential for teaching students digital literacy skills and the most current educational resources. By providing computers, the Internet, educational software, and tools such as interactive whiteboards, students are drawn into lessons and activities, creativity is fostered, and they are prepared for the digital workforce they will encounter in the years to come.

It enhances transportation networks, especially in remote and marginalized areas, that provide students with regular and easy access to schools (Awad and Saadeh, 2021). Efficient transportation networks that are established widely can remove the barriers posed by pupils' occupational backgrounds to obtaining inclusive education, increase their attendance, and ensure continuity in education by lowering school dropout rates.

3.3. Teacher Training and Support

Even Palestinian teacher unions themselves acknowledge that much more can be done to boost the status and quality of teaching practice in Palestine by improving professional development opportunities, promoting excellence in teaching and reinforcing teacher training programs if Palestine is to raise educational standards for all and close the large gap in achievement between different sectors of Palestinian society. For these reasons, all-encompassing teacher training programs in contemporary teaching approaches, educational tactics, and effective classroom management strategies are necessary, and sources must be allocated to this end (Abu-Rabia and Ismail, 2023). Equipping educators with the right resources takes them from traditional measures of success as a teacher (i.e. their proficiency as a teacher) to increased student engagement and learning outcomes.

Ensuring that educators are motivated to learn through unending practice and building professional development ensures that teachers are learning regularly - keeping themselves updated with the new trends in education and innovating (Hassan and Khader, 2022). Through workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs, TA fellows may establish forums to cooperate, share best practices, and develop instructional strategies to serve a diverse student body effectively. Teachers are motivated to initiate innovation and improvement of competencies since such incentives give them an opportunity for career advancement, recognition programs, and awards (Daher and Odeh, 2021). The teachers who are honoured and rewarded for their exemplary teaching methodologies keep a culture of high performance, professionalism and dedication.

3.4. Community Engagement

Community engagement strategies that aim to improve education and narrow the gap in Palestine must promote parental involvement, partnerships with CSOs, and a culture of lifelong learning.

Parents need to be involved in their children's education for academic achievement and the development of well-rounded children (Abu-Rabia and Qasrawi, 2023). To improve parental skills at home and support learning, schools could facilitate effective communication with parents, involve them in consensual processes, and provide resources and workshops.

Collaboration with non-governmental organizations, community members, and civil society stakeholders can enhance educational resources, empower student support services, and improve life opportunities (Hijazi and Barghouthi, 2022). These collective efforts include things like after-school programs that mentor young people to participate in extracurricular activities that complement classroom instruction while helping to ensure a quality education.

The adage, lifelong learning contributes to innovation and skillset elevation and progress (Salem and Issa, 2021). Adult education programs, community learning centres, and libraries encourage people to take up new hobbies, learn new things and contribute to modern society.

3.5. Compensatory Measures

In Palestine, compensatory measures are used to prevent or reduce educational inequalities by directly initiating appropriate and specific interventions that recognize and respond to the importance of resolving the generations-old inequities.

Scholarship programs accompanying underprivileged students, refugees, and vulnerable communities provide financial assistance and better quality education (Khalidi and Abu-Lughod, 2023). These programs ensure a brighter future for students by removing financial barriers and enabling them to access opportunities for skill training programs, vocational training and higher education.

Counselling, remedial education, and inclusive practices are specialized support services that respond to learning needs and enhance educational inclusivity (Hammad and Nasser, 2022). By identifying these issues sooner and delivering tailored interventions earlier, students can overcome obstacles to their academic success and move toward achieving their highest potential.

Some available practices include digital learning to overcome the scrimmage of education and ways to nourish 21st-century skills, such as digital literacy, e-learning, and online resources (Soboh et al., 2023). Students in remote schools benefit from these programs as they provide access to quality educational opportunities and content, ensuring that location only determines what a child can access.

3.6. Scholarship Programs

Globally, vocational training programs and career readiness initiatives have been ongoing to prepare students for post-school education for employment and financial independence by providing real-world experience, job training and entrepreneurial opportunities (Ahmed and Saleh, 2021). These programs provide the skills and knowledge students need to successfully enter the workforce economy, aligning their educational experience to industry needs and workforce demands.

Providing underprivileged students with financial aid, scholarships, and grants is one key strategy that can be employed to address variations in educational achievement and overall higher education available to students in Palestine.

Most financial aid for higher education is via scholarship programs, often targeting poor students, refugees, and marginalized communities (Hamdan and Saleh, 2024). While programs such as these will often cover the cost of living expenses, tuition, and other educational expenses, many programs across the country do what many states have now also recognized as common practice in Maine, that AGAIN opens the door to access to high-quality postsecondary education opportunities for gifted but otherwise underprivileged students by removing one major obstacle - funding.

Grants and scholarships specially designed for students from low-income families help prevent financial constraints from impeding academic goals and educational advancement (Abu-Lughod and Zahran, 2023). Institutions and organizations offer merit-based or need-based scholarships to deserving students, allowing them to focus on their studies without worrying about money and helping them succeed academically.

However, low-income students rely on their financial aid packages that provide work-study, grants, and scholarships that build a whole cushion around them (Khalil and Awad, 2022). These actions help underrepresented students pay for education and assist with their academic achievement, graduation rates, and retention.

3.7. Specialized Support Services

Making remedial classes, counselling, and inclusive education programs available to marginalized groups (refugees and children with disabilities) will help ensure comprehensive development and educational equity in Palestine.

These students receive training in basic classes to eliminate these deep problems in their minds. This training increases their desire to learn and their intelligence and may increase their safety rates in schools (Al-Hijazi and Barghouthi, 2023). These programs work to bridge learning gaps, providing all new students with the fundamental math, language, and literacy skills necessary to learn in the classroom.

Services related to mental health and personal growth: Counselling support can be a significant part of the services students may need, particularly those underrepresented students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Professional counsellors provide a difference in direction, support, and intervention to encourage healthy student outcomes and positive academic attitudes toward learning.

Inclusive education programs offer mainstream opportunities and services for students with disabilities, including refugees with special needs (Ahmed and Abu-Rabia, 2021). An inclusive learning environment allows equity and diversity within the classroom to cater to every student's full participation and reach of potential.

3.8. Digital Learning Initiatives

This pandemic has also served as a sentinel event, which has brought to the forefront the fact that advancements and aggressive mobilization through technology to ensure educational access and build learning capabilities, especially in marginalized areas of Palestine, are long overdue and cannot wait any longer.

Strong digital learning platforms and tools can provide all students with interactive lessons, educational materials, and the opportunity to learn from home despite geographical limitations (Dance, 2024). Additionally, these programs offer education for thousands of students with limited (if not none) access to conventional schools, as they are based mainly in far-lying or combat-prone areas.

Online resources include e-books, instructional videos, and virtual libraries supporting self-directed learning. Hence, they positively complement classroom instruction as they enrich the learning process (Khalil and Farah, 2022). By providing thousands of learning resources for a wide range of subjects and learning styles, digital platforms cater to individual learning needs to ensure academic success.

Silva and Pires (2020), although they did not refer to digital literacy per se, showed that students use digital literacy for critical thinking, productivity tool use, and platform navigation. The goal of these programs is for students to become responsible digital citizens and use technology to learn, communicate, and advance in their future careers.

3.9. Vocational Training

Young Palestinians need exposure to entrepreneurship, vocational training, and skills-building that make them employable and financially independent.

Vocational training programs bridge the gap between education and workforce demands by delivering hands-on learning experiences and training in specific trades and industries to offer specialized services (Salem and Houry, 2023). School-to-work programs that provide career training as a ladder of opportunity to low-income youth align young workers with the demands of the labour market and help them embark on careers in areas such as carpentry, plumbing, hospitality, and healthcare.

Entrepreneurial initiatives provide entrepreneurship guidance, resources, and mentorship for the youth interested in starting and scaling their businesses (Hassan and Farah, 2022). Importantly, these programs empower young people to start businesses amongst themselves and, in doing so, create jobs for themselves and forge sustainable local economic development through developing entrepreneurial skills and creative and holistic business know-how.

Internship and apprenticeship programs also provide on-the-job training, industry knowledge, and networks and bridge the gap between formal education and work for young people (Abu-Omar and Daher, 2021). It combines supervised practical training with on-the-job experiences, providing added confidence and skill set to penetrate the workforce easily.

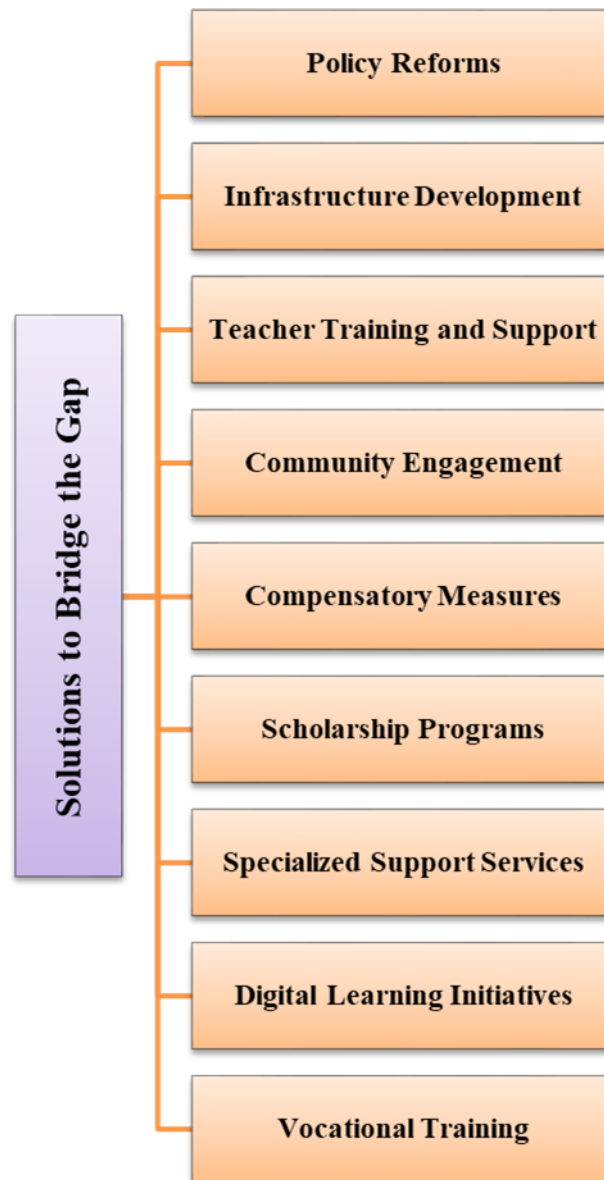


Figure 2 Solutions to Bridge the Gap

4. Conclusion

This research paper highlights the importance of bridging the educational divide in Palestine to ensure access to inclusive and equitable educational programs that will enable social cohesion, sustainable development, and peace to last for generations to come (Nasser and Mansour, 2023). This study reveals the intersectionality of sociopolitical infrastructural and curricular factors contributing to disparities in education in Palestine. These challenges demand comprehensive and targeted action in several areas to deliver meaningful educational equity and quality results.

These divergences must be urgently dealt with before they affect Palestinian youth's life chances and the furtherance and constancy of society (Al-Dajani and Salameh, 2022). In the global landscape of increasing change, sustainable development, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness all require access to quality education and skills.

Khalil and Awadallah (2023) believed that equitable and inclusive education should serve as an agent of transformative change that promotes social cohesion and empathy; hence, the need to functionally equip the 21st-century citizen with the necessary tools to engage in nation-building. Therefore, educational establishments in Palestine help build this society long-term by instilling strong, sound future leaders who can solve the hardest challenges and help the world by building community relations and cohesion.

4.1. Recommendations for Future Research

This section highlights key areas for future research to mend interventions in Palestine and to advance our understanding of education disparities. Emphasize evidence-based decision-making and international best practices. Longitudinal work will be important to assess educational interventions' impact on youth social mobility, employment and education outcomes over time (Farah and Khader, 2024). A longitudinal perspective on the impact of policies on the future provides valuable information to guide future educational strategies and supports. The best way to proceed would be to develop comparative studies that provide information on Palestinian policies, practices and outcomes in education about successful models from similar contexts or best practices from around the world, which can hold promise for illuminating findings (Soboh and Abu-Rabia, 2023). By replicating and finding good, bad and innovative practices already happening in other educational systems worldwide, Palestine can benefit from focused changes, redistribution of resources and capacity building.

Policy evaluations move the scientific focus from what should work to what is working or not working (Khalidi and Saleh, 2024) and are essential for evidence-based decision-making that focuses on the implementation, effectiveness, and outcomes of education policies and reforms. Aligning with learning objectives, resource use, stakeholder input, and equitable outcomes will be useful benchmarks to evaluate the policy change process to inform the necessary changes, fill these gaps, and ensure a long-term improvement in education.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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