

Hope and Healing

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Students in Gaza are being deliberately denied an education, with terrible ongoing psychological damage. This paper outlines a course – *Hope & Healing* – that helped UK academics prepare to teach a cohort of English language trainee-teachers from the Islamic University of Gaza. Research is presented on the intercultural training they received prior to delivering their sessions, and on a post-course workshop gathering trainers’ – and students’ – impressions of the initiative. The course organisers will also present a ‘toolkit’ that may be of use in other zones of conflict, helping to build trainers’ confidence when delivering online teaching to traumatised students.

Full paper

This paper presents educational research designed to support Global North teachers in delivering culturally appropriate online teaching sessions to female students in Gaza who are traumatised by the current war, yet eager to engage in education as a way of rebuilding their lives and feeling more hopeful towards the future. It provides the initial findings of a June 2025 online teaching collaboration between staff and students from Northumbria and Durham universities and the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), and the educational development initiative designed to support it.

Hope & Healing builds on a successful pilot online teaching initiative taught by Nazmi Al-Masri and Bill Guariento, respective Programme Leaders for the BA English Language programmes at IUG and Northumbria, in semester 1, 2024-5. In June 2025 a further 8 lecturer-volunteers from different universities and with different specialisms in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences will teach a 2-hour interactive workshop to a new cohort on the same programme. *Hope and Healing* builds on longstanding partnerships between the team members at Northumbria and IUG, dating back to 2015 in which care, collegiality and compassion have been key (Guariento & Burns, 2024).

The overall aim is to provide 'psycho-academic support' for students by rebuilding their confidence in learning in a compassionate and caring environment (Pranjol, 2025). The orientation session will focus on how to do this in a culturally sensitive way, how to avoid 'triggering subjects' which risk re-traumatising students, and how to teach with care for female students who have been disproportionately affected by the war (UN Gender Alert). We aim to take a decolonial and multilingual approach, centring Palestinian voices in Gaza as well as in those in our local community. Postgraduate students from the Durham Palestinian Educational Trust will contribute their knowledge and provide a real time linguistic and cultural 'bridge' to complement the online partnership.

Methods

All teaching was suspended in Gaza in 2023 but, showing remarkable resilience, the Gaza Emergency Committee was formed in April 2024 to mobilise support in rebuilding the sector and to defend the human right to education. Common social media platforms are the safest and most convenient medium through which Palestinians are engaging in collaborative learning (Hope Hubs) despite intermittent coverage and shortage of electricity. The community organisation Hope Hubs have played a vital role in providing technical support for the initiatives to date, recording teaching sessions, for asynchronous learning and for analysis by the research team.

The orientation and post teaching reflection sessions will be based on [Intercultural Reflecting Teams](#) (IntRef) methodology which requires participants to provide 'cases', i.e. challenging situations from their teaching, with 2-3 chosen for discussion, following a pre-

defined structure to enable learning by participants. There will be two virtual interactive workshops – pre- and post-teaching – to facilitate intercultural dialogue between partners. Adhering to NU's ethics guidance, data will be generated by recording of the orientation and reflective sessions, as well as capturing staff and student feedback via a post-lesson survey.

The pre-teach workshop will involve input and discussion with the Co-I from IUG and UK-based Palestinian postgraduate students, to provide a context for the intervention. The intercultural reflecting team element will start with discussion of a 'case' based on a challenge/educational practice from the semester 1 initiative, followed by discussion of two further 'cases' chosen from volunteering academics of their planned session design. The workshop will conclude with Q&A.

For the post-teach workshop 'cases' will be chosen from participants' challenge/educational practice from their teaching session, using the IntRef format, concluding with discussion and next steps.

Workshops will be held at Northumbria University with external link-ups via Zoom.

A session will also be held with participating students, if the situation allows, who will be invited to share a 'case' from their experience of the learning, using the IntRef format, facilitated by the Palestinian students.

A short survey will be sent to students and the teacher following teaching sessions to gather feedback on their experiences.

Finally, a survey will be sent to participating staff and students to evaluate their experiences of the intervention and the educational support provided, including the IntRef approach.

Outcomes

Drawing on the team's expertise and road-tested experience of co-constructing research, our aim is to produce and share a model of best practice of value in other conflict contexts. To this end, we will create an online Toolkit containing written and audio-visual materials uploaded in both Arabic and English to a YouTube channel.

The paper will present the Toolkit.