



From Crisis to Continuity: Education as Care in Displacement and Refugee Resettlement

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Abstract

Human mobility and migration have reached unprecedented levels, driven by protracted conflicts, environmental changes, and intensified globalization, significantly impacting the quality of education for millions of learners, who are forced to leave their homes, communities, and learning environments. Human mobility occurs both internally within a country and across borders. Forcibly displaced learners face intersecting challenges of loss, trauma, and instability. At the same time, the majority reside in low- and middle-income nations that shoulder the most significant responsibility for providing access to learning with limited resources. In these contexts, education is a means of survival and a bridge from crisis to continuity, offering psychosocial support, cultural and linguistic stability, and the hope of recovery. In connecting structural innovation to ethical responsibility, this work proposes *education as care* as a framework for restoring dignity, inclusion, and empowerment through ethically governed, trauma-sensitive, and culturally and historically sustaining systems of learning. This article explores how educators and policymakers can foster sustainable learning for displaced and resettled students by embracing innovation rooted in care, ethics, and equity. Drawing on relevant global research and field-based initiatives, this study explores educational practices in six conflict areas and six host contexts, concluding that when care, transparency, and ethical responsibility inform educational design, schooling becomes a moral act of restoration, solidarity, and human dignity.

Keywords: *Education as Care; Human Mobility; Displacement; Trauma-Sensitive Pedagogy; Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy; Refugee Resettlement; Continuity of Learning*

I. Introduction

Forced displacement has risen sharply, reaching 114 million people in late 2023, 122.6 million by mid-2024, and 123.2 million by the end of 2024 (UNHCR, 2023, 2024b, 2024c, 2025a). Millions of school-aged children and youth are among those uprooted, with more than half of refugee children currently out of school amid worsening crises and widening funding gaps (UNHCR, 2025a). Low- and middle-income nations host 73 percent of people requiring international protection, while Least Developed Countries host nearly one-quarter despite limited resources; furthermore, 67 percent of refugees remain in neighboring countries (Simeon, 2023; UNHCR, 2025a). For these learners, education restores safety, stability, and the possibility of a future beyond crisis (EIE Hub, 2024; Forced Migration Review, 2019; Huss et al., 2021; Palik et al., 2023; Pham, 2025; UNHCR, 2025b).

Within this global context, the INEE Minimum Standards (2024) establish essential expectations for safe, inclusive, and quality education during emergency and recovery, emphasizing equity, resilience, and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16. These standards affirm trauma-sensitive, culturally sustaining, and ethically grounded pedagogy as central to continuity for displaced learners (INEE, 2024; UNHCR, 2025b). A central question therefore emerges: How can educators design learning that is innovative, equitable, and rooted in care, so that education becomes a force for empowerment? This reframes care as a moral and relational foundation for systemic transformation (Bernard, 2023; Muhammad, 2023; Ndabananiye et al., 2025; Noddings, 2013; UNHCR, 2025).

Across conflict and host settings, education fulfills two interconnected roles: protection in crisis and continuity in resettlement. In conflict-affected environments, schooling provides safety, routine, and psychosocial grounding, while in host countries it bridges learners' identities, aspirations, and new systems. Across all contexts, educators must apply trauma-responsive, culturally grounded, and flexible approaches so schools function as spaces of healing, belonging, and hope (Avery et al., 2025; Forced Migration Review, 2019; Muhammad, 2023; Pham, 2025; UNHCR, 2025; Yoshikawa et al., 2022).

II. Literature Review

The present review of the literature synthesizes empirical and conceptual work on education in crisis and displacement from 2020 to 2025, with attention to three intersecting dimensions: education in emergencies and conflict zones, host-country responses and integration, and emerging theoretical, ethical, and pedagogical developments that connect trauma sensitivity, cultural sustainability, and governance. Foundational work on care, culture, and identity provides an anchor for these recent studies. Noddings (2013), for example, conceptualizes care as a relational ethical stance, while Carter (2006) describes how learners navigate multiple cultural worlds through processes of straddling. Gay (2018) and Paris (2012) extend this conversation to culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Carello and Butler (2015) emphasize that trauma-informed educational practice requires educators to support student well-being and examine their own emotional labor and ethical responsibilities in the educational realm.

That forced displacement continues to rise globally is a given, placing significant strain on education systems, as documented in UNHCR's Global Trends 2023 and Mid-Year Trends 2024, showing sustained increases in refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people, with children comprising a large share of those uprooted by conflict, persecution, and climate-related crises (UNHCR, 2024b, 2024c). Global Trends 2024 further underscores that low and middle-income countries host most of the world's displaced populations, while least developed countries shoulder a disproportionate burden relative to their economic capacity (UNHCR, 2025a). The Refugee Education Report 2025 highlights that more

than half of refugee children remain out of school and frames education as an unbreakable promise grounded in human rights obligations and international legal frameworks (UNHCR, 2025b).

Palik et al. (2023) map interventions that combine academic instruction, psychosocial support, and flexible modalities, and Aiello et al. (2025) show that school success depends on the interaction of structural factors, school climate, teacher expectations, and family resources. Dueggeli et al. (2021) similarly demonstrate how risk and protective factors shape resilience pathways for migrant youth. As illustrated in Figure 1, barriers to learning vary across settings, with trauma, disrupted schooling, and infrastructure loss more acute in conflict contexts and xenophobia and teacher shortages prominent in host countries.

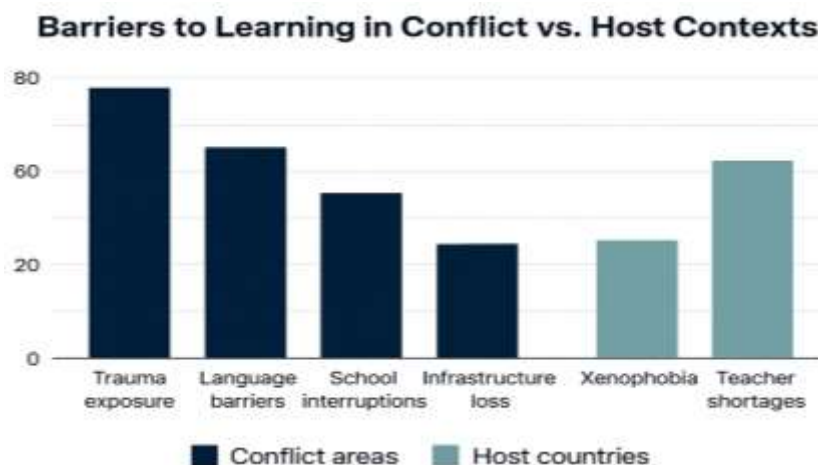


Figure 1. Barriers to Learning in Conflict and Host Contexts.

This figure compares six major obstacles affecting refugees and displaced learners across conflict areas and host education systems.

Education in Emergencies and Conflict Zones

Education in conflict-affected settings operates under extreme pressure yet remains a critical source of protection and stability. The INEE Minimum Standards frame education as lifesaving (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2024), a reality seen in Syria, where Education Cannot Wait (2023) and Qaddour and Husain (2022) document long-term infrastructure collapse and unstable funding. Similar patterns appear in Yemen, where Education Cannot Wait (2024a), the Global Education Cluster, and Ulstein (2024) describe damaged schools and unpaid teachers. Gaza represents one of the most severe cases, with ACAPS (2024), the Global Education Cluster (2023), UNRWA (2024), and OCHA (2024) reporting massive displacement and destruction.

Across Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, and other settings, UNICEF (2023, 2024), UNHCR (2021), and Huss et al. (2021) affirm that restoring routine and emotional stability is central to sustaining learning. Despite these challenges, however, emerging research identifies innovations that maintain continuity. Taftaf and Williams (2020) show that distance education can preserve instructional connection with adequate access and linguistic support. Gichuhi (2025) notes the benefits and digital inequities associated with technology use. Stoeckli et al. (2025) demonstrate how culturally adapted psychosocial apps provide critical mental health support for Arabic-speaking refugees, while Perez Peguero (2024) illustrates how mobile language-learning tools and culturally relevant curricula strengthen integration and learning continuity for displaced students.

Host Country Responses and Integration Models

Host and resettlement systems are tasked with fostering belonging and opportunity, yet studies consistently show gaps between policy and experience. Across OECD contexts, recurring barriers include limited language support, uneven teacher capacity, and inconsistent coordination (Janta et al., 2022; Soriano et al., 2022). Even with strong policy frameworks, Germany, for example, struggles with implementation (Altinkalp et al., 2022; EC, 2020, 2022, 2024; Eurydice, 2022; van Driel, 2020), while Norway experiences cultural nonrecognition in asylum settings and uncertainty around multilingual instruction (Kalisha, 2024; Moraczewska & Randen, 2024). In Canada and Australia, initiatives such as SWIS and the Refugee Education Council provide support (Global Affairs Canada, 2024; Government of Canada, 2023), but structural inequities persist (Kaufmann, 2021; Lam, 2019; The CCOPE, 2020; Australian Department of Education, 2019, 2022; Foundation House, 2023, 2024; Norrish & Brunzell, 2023; Victorian Department of Education, 2024). Uganda offers one of the most integrated national responses; nevertheless, it faces overcrowding, resource strain, and teacher shortages (UNHCR, 2024a; Education Cannot Wait, 2024b; UNESCO, 2024a). Targeted policies in the Netherlands expand opportunities (UAF, 2024). However, Western nations still exclude refugees from knowledge production (Abamosa, 2023, 2024), and higher education access for South Sudanese refugees in Uganda remains shaped by structural barriers and learner agency (Sempebwao, 2023).

Trauma Sensitive and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Across conflict and host settings, scholars agree that trauma-sensitive and culturally sustaining pedagogies are essential for displaced learners: regulation strategies, predictable routines, and relational practices strengthen well-being (Brunzell et al., 2019; Norrish & Brunzell, 2023), and trauma-informed teaching requires recognizing vicarious trauma and modeling ethical, reflective engagement (Carello & Butler, 2015). Reviews emphasize school–family–community collaboration and the need to adapt global models locally (Lembke et al., 2024), while studies show that teacher compassion supports trauma-informed practice (O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023), educators in resource-poor settings shoulder heavy psychosocial demands (Rajabi et al., 2025), and teachers of refugee youth navigate complex emotional challenges themselves (McDiarmid et al., 2022).

Conceptual work frames trauma-sensitive education as pedagogical love grounded in care and relational presence (El Khatib, 2025; Wilkinson & Kauko, 2020). At the same time, culturally sustaining pedagogy is needed to avoid deficit framing, sustaining linguistic and cultural pluralism (Banks, 2023; Gay, 2018; Institute of Education Sciences & REL Pacific, 2023; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), and centering joy, identity, intellect, and criticality (Muhammad, 2023). Empirical studies across Europe, East Africa, and the Middle East confirm that honoring students' languages, cultural knowledge, and community contexts strengthens engagement, belonging, and integration (Boit et al., 2021; Huss et al., 2021; Kaur & Szorenyi, 2020; Wassell & Hawrylak, 2021).

Governance, Ethics, and Education as Care

A growing body of research links classroom practice to macro-level governance, showing that systemic structures enable or constrain what schools can achieve: Ndabananiye et al. (2025) emphasize financing, strong local education groups, and country ownership in fragile contexts, while UNESCO IIEP (2025) and the Open Government Partnership (2025) underscore transparency, open school data, and participatory governance as foundations for trust and accountability. Grek (2022) illustrates how SDG metrics expose inequities, and Menashy and Zakharia (2023) caution that partnerships in emergencies carry both potential and risk depending on power dynamics. Critical scholarship further interrogates racial, colonial, and epistemic structures shaping education in emergencies, including imperial entanglements (Novelli & Kutan, 2024), racial capitalism and structural racism (Oddy, 2024; Singh et al., 2025), and decolonial approaches that re-center displaced communities (Arat Koc, 2020; Vasist &

Krishnan, 2022). Visual and arts-based methodologies foreground youth perspectives (Jay, 2025; Vecchio et al., 2020), while participatory, trauma-informed research stresses reciprocal, ethical collaboration (Diab, 2025; Shah et al., 2024). Leadership and system-design scholarship reinforce the importance of locally grounded leadership (Mitchell et al., 2025), empowerment-oriented and sustainable system models (Minescu, 2023; Soe et al., 2024), and participatory policy consultation to advance equity (Park, 2025).

Gaps and Directions for the Present Study

Despite substantial research, critical gaps remain. Longitudinal studies that follow displaced learners and teachers across multiple education systems are still scarce, limiting understanding of how trauma-sensitive and culturally sustaining practices shape long-term academic, psychosocial, and civic outcomes, particularly in protracted crises such as Yemen, Syria, Gaza, Sudan, and Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2021, 2024b; UNICEF, 2024; Ulstein, 2024). Participatory and arts-based methodologies are expanding, yet displaced teachers and students remain primarily positioned as data sources rather than co-creators of knowledge and policy (Abamosa, 2024; Keser Ozmantar et al., 2023; Yoshikawa et al., 2022). Moreover, little is known about how governance reforms, open data, and accountability mechanisms practically support “education as care” in daily school practice rather than remaining aspirational within global discourse (Menashy & Zakharia, 2023; Ndabananiye et al., 2025; UNESCO IIEP, 2025). The present analysis addresses these gaps, integrating research in emergencies and host contexts with theoretical and ethical work on trauma sensitivity, cultural sustainability, and governance, using *education as care* as a conceptual lens.

III. Conceptual Framework of Education as Care

Education as care frames teaching and learning in displacement as a moral, relational, and humanizing practice, positioning students’ well-being at the center of educational decision-making (Forced Migration Review, 2019; Noddings, 2013). This perspective acknowledges that for displaced learners, education means more than just academic instruction. This study employs *Education as care* as a foundational framework (see Figure 2) to demonstrate how trauma-sensitive, culturally sustaining, and ethically and structurally innovative practices operate together to support displaced learners across crisis and host-country contexts. It becomes a stabilizing force that supports healing, continuity, and the restoration of dignity amid crisis, urging systems to respond to immediate protection needs and the long-term possibilities of transformation (Dryden-Peterson, 2019; Muhammad, 2023; Noddings, 2013; UNHCR, 2025b).

The concept of *education as care* also includes the social and cultural realities of forced migration. Refugee families draw on “combined capitals and strengths” (Boit et al., 2021, p. 199) that help them adapt to new environments while negotiating loss and uncertainty. This process mirrors Carter’s (2006) concept of “straddling boundaries” (p. 304), where individuals navigate multiple cultural worlds at once, a pattern evident even among young refugee learners. Within this analysis, *education as care* operates through trauma sensitive pedagogy (Brunzell et al., 2019), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Muhammad, 2023; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), and ethical and structural innovation (Dryden-Peterson, 2022), forming an approach that centers care as a pedagogical and moral imperative in providing a quality education in displacement contexts.



Figure 2. Education as Care Framework.

This framework illustrates the interconnected dimensions of *Education as Care*.

Trauma-Sensitive Pedagogy (TSP)

Trauma-sensitive pedagogy (TSP) recognizes that trauma reshapes the developing brain, disrupting attention, memory, and engagement, particularly for displaced learners facing instability and loss of routine (Brunzell et al., 2019; Downey & Greco, 2023; O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023). Overactivation of the amygdala and reduced prefrontal regulation weaken executive functioning, making predictable, compassionate environments essential (Downey & Greco, 2023). Research shows that teacher compassion strengthens trauma-informed practice (O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023), aligning with Muhammad's (2023) emphasis on relational care. Within TSP, emotional safety precedes intellectual growth, and teachers serve as stabilizing figures who model empathy, regulation, and consistent care to rebuild students' agency and belonging (Bernard, 2023; Brunzell et al., 2019; Downey & Greco, 2023; O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023).

These conditions enable learners to regain cognitive focus, as consistent routines and affirming communication help regulate stress responses and restore attention and working memory (Carello & Butler, 2015; Forced Migration Review, 2019; Perry, 2006). In crisis and displacement contexts, every teacher-student interaction can retrigger distress or reaffirm safety, which is why trauma-sensitive educators center connection, restorative practices, and predictable relationships (Carello & Butler, 2015; El Khatib, 2025). Perry's (2006) reminder that "the most powerful therapy is human love" (p. 38) underscores how classrooms rooted in care become sanctuaries where healing supports sustainable learning for displaced students (Duegeli et al., 2021).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) is an instructional approach that nurtures and sustains students' cultural and linguistic identities, positioning these assets as central to learning rather than redirecting learners toward dominant cultural norms (Banks, 2023; IES, 2025; Muhammad, 2023). Rooted in multicultural and culturally responsive traditions (Gay, 2018), CSP expands these frameworks by insisting that cultural continuity is foundational to justice in education. Paris (2012) and Paris and

Alim (2017) define CSP as an approach that “perpetuate[s] and foster[s] linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism” (p. 1), a view echoed by REL Pacific (2023), which emphasizes leveraging family knowledge, sustaining linguistic and cultural traditions, strengthening agency, and promoting critical reflection. In host-country classrooms, CSP functions as a bridge between identity and integration, aligning with UNHCR’s Refugee Education Report 2025, which asserts that “education in displacement must affirm identity, preserve culture, and strengthen agency” (p. 44).

Implementing CSP requires deliberate pedagogical choices, including the use of multilingual texts, translanguaging, integration of refugee narratives, and culturally grounded projects that connect home experiences with new learning environments. Gay (2018) underscores that culturally responsive and sustaining teaching draws on students’ cultural knowledge to make learning meaningful and effective, reinforcing the ethic of care embedded within this framework. For displaced learners, CSP becomes a protective and empowering force, ensuring that integration does not lead to assimilation but instead supports cultural expression, continuity, and dignity within education systems (Muhammad, 2023).

Ethical and Structural Innovation

Pedagogical care cannot flourish without systems that uphold it, which means education can only move from crisis to continuity when transparent, equitable, and ethically grounded structures guide teaching and learning. Ethical and structural innovation requires rethinking how institutions define responsibility and measure success so that care is embedded in governance, funding, and accountability processes that protect dignity and equity (Dryden-Peterson, 2022; Forced Migration Review, 2019; INEE, 2024; Noddings, 2013). Ethical governance reflects this moral dimension, balancing accountability with compassion and positioning transparency as an expression of respect and participation as collective stewardship (Noddings, 2013; UNESCO IIEP, 2025). At the Open Government Partnership Global Summit, Benavides emphasized transparency, participation, and national ownership as conditions for durable educational change (Open Government Partnership, 2025), while Ndabananiye et al. (2025) cautioned that declining aid requires unified, care-oriented systems where local education groups strengthen national accountability.

Positioning *education as care* bridges pedagogy and policy, reframing success through access, agency, belonging, and well-being. Transparent, compassionate governance creates conditions where trauma-sensitive and culturally sustaining pedagogies can thrive, supporting the holistic needs of displaced learners. When educators, leaders, and policymakers share an ethical commitment to care, policy becomes a tool for empowerment rather than control, allowing equity to function as a foundational condition for learning and aligning classroom-level care with broader commitments to justice and cultural sustainability (Dryden-Peterson, 2022; Forced Migration Review, 2019; INEE, 2024; Muhammad, 2023; Noddings, 2013; Paris & Alim, 2017).

IV. Education Within Six Conflict Zones

Conflict disrupts every dimension of education: curriculum, governance, safety, and belonging; yet, even in the most fragile contexts, communities persist in rebuilding learning (Forced Migration Review, 2019). This section examines six case contexts: Afghanistan, Yemen, Gaza (State of Palestine), Syria, Sudan, and Ukraine, to illustrate how education systems navigate collapse and renewal through trauma-sensitive, community-driven, and ethically and structurally innovative responses. These cases were selected to represent a continuum of educational vulnerability and structural response capacity, moving from protracted fragility to adaptive resilience. Refer to Appendix A for a comparative table on education within these six conflict zones.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan faces one of the world's most severe education crises, with approximately 8 million children, including 3.8 million girls, in need of education-in-emergencies support, which is an increase of more than 170 percent since early 2021 (Global Education Cluster: Afghanistan, 2024). The collapse of development funding, economic sanctions, COVID-19 disruptions, and ongoing conflict have severely impacted access to education. Before the Taliban's return to power, 927 schools and community-based education centers had already closed due to insecurity. After August 2021, restrictions on adolescent girls' education further deepened the learning crisis. Only 51 percent of school-aged boys and 46 percent of girls were attending school on average, leaving millions at risk of permanent dropout (Global Education Cluster: Afghanistan, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Further, the new Ministry of Education has reported that it can only pay 30 percent of teachers' salaries, leaving about 187,000 educators without pay and threatening the continuity of instruction nationwide. Prolonged school closures during the pandemic and renewed instability have widened learning gaps, particularly for marginalized and rural learners. Within such fragile environments, trauma-sensitive pedagogy, teacher support, and community-led education models are crucial anchors for sustaining learning and dignity, reaffirming that education in Afghanistan is a humanitarian lifeline and an imperative moral act of care.

Yemen

After nearly a decade of armed conflict, Yemen's education system remains on the verge of collapse (Education Cannot Wait 2024a; Global Education Cluster: Yemen, 2024). More than 2,000 schools have been damaged, destroyed, or occupied by military groups (Ulstein, 2024). Over 8.1 million school-aged children require educational assistance, and at least two million are out of school entirely (Education Cannot Wait, 2024a; UNICEF, 2024). Mobile schools and non-formal education programs, supported by local volunteers, have emerged as lifelines for displaced children, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions (International Platform for Education in Emergencies and Development [IPNED], 2023).

Despite severe funding shortages, educators have continued to teach under trees, in mosques, and in temporary shelters, acts of pedagogical resistance that affirm education as a moral duty. Education Cannot Wait (2024a) announced a \$5 million USD emergency response grant to support education for children affected by the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The intent was to restore access to safe and inclusive learning for vulnerable girls and boys by providing psychosocial support, teacher training, and school rehabilitation initiatives. Yemen underlines the importance of continuity, emphasizing educators' ethical commitment and the role of learning in survival.

Gaza (State of Palestine)

In Gaza, education has been devastated by ongoing conflict, leaving more than 625,000 students and 22,564 teachers affected by school closures and direct attacks on educational facilities (ACAPS, 2024; Global Education Cluster, 2023). By November 2023, 61 percent of all schools, about 300 buildings, had already sustained damage, illustrating the rapid escalation of destruction (UNRWA, 2024). As of late 2024, over 88 percent of school buildings, approximately 500 out of 564, have been destroyed or severely damaged, while 86 percent of Gaza's land remains under evacuation orders, forcing schools to serve as shelters for nearly 787,000 internally displaced people (ACAPS, 2024; OCHA, 2024). The human toll continues to rise, with more than 10,000 students and over 400 educators killed, 11,000 students and over 2,000 teachers injured in 100 days of war, and over one million children in urgent need of mental health and psychosocial support to cope with trauma and loss (UNRWA, 2024; Global Education Cluster, 2023).

In response, UNICEF and its partners have established Temporary Learning and Protection Spaces that incorporate play, storytelling, art, and social-emotional learning to rebuild trust and restore emotional stability (UNICEF, 2024). These environments embody trauma-sensitive pedagogy, grounded in care and human connection, where safety and belonging take precedence over academic instruction. In Gaza, education is a means of survival and an expression of resilience, offering children the possibility of hope and humanity amid destruction. Accordingly, Huss et al. (2021) found that the *School of Peace* model, which supports an arts-based, relational, and community-centered learning environment, can help restore emotional stability and a sense of belonging for refugee children living in camps.

Syria

Like Yemen, in terms of duration of conflict, Syria's has lasted over a decade, worsening the education crisis. Over 7,000 schools have been damaged or destroyed, and more than two million children remain out of school (UNICEF, 2023). The combination of displacement, poverty, and trauma has fragmented education across government-held, opposition, and autonomous territories. In response, NGOs and community networks have developed mobile and tented classrooms, community-led instruction, and hybrid learning initiatives, such as those supported by Education Cannot Wait (2023). Psychosocial support, arts-based activities, and digital learning have become critical in rebuilding learners' cognitive and emotional resilience (Qaddour & Husain, 2022). Syria demonstrates how *education as care* can take root amid destruction, transforming community-led teaching into a form of collective healing.

Sudan

Sudan's recurrent conflicts and mass displacements have left millions of children out of school. The 2023 internal conflict displaced more than 7 million people, including over three million school-aged children (UNICEF, 2024). In many regions, teachers continue to work without pay, and children attend lessons in makeshift classrooms, tents, or community shelters using donated and improvised materials. Despite minimal institutional capacity, volunteer-driven literacy networks, local NGOs, and youth-led initiatives have sustained learning through radio programs, community-based instruction, and informal literacy circles (Global Education Cluster: Sudan, 2024). These efforts exemplify how ethical and relational care replace formal governance in maintaining access to education. Through community solidarity and collective resilience, education persists as a moral and social contract. Sudan, thus, represents a model of *education as care* sustained through shared responsibility and hope, where learning continues because communities refuse to let it disappear.

Ukraine

Ukraine has become a leading example of technologically enabled educational continuity amid conflict. Since 2022, more than 3,400 schools have been damaged and at least 400 destroyed (UNESCO, 2024). In response, the Ministry of Education, supported by UNESCO and the Global Education Coalition, expanded hybrid models combining in-person instruction, distance learning, and psychosocial support (UNESCO Global Education Coalition, 2024b). Digital platforms, resource hubs, and All-Ukrainian School Online have sustained learning under bombardment, demonstrating how equity-centered digital inclusion operationalizes *education as care* by maintaining safety, routine, and student agency across physical and virtual environments.

Across conflict and displacement settings, the three interconnected dimensions of TSP, CSP, and ethical and structural innovation illustrate how *education as care* operates. TSP is indispensable in Gaza, Syria, and Afghanistan, where violence and instability require educators to rebuild emotional safety and cognitive readiness (Huss et al., 2021; Taftaf & Williams, 2020; UNHCR, 2021). CSP functions as a means of identity protection and cultural continuity in Yemen and Sudan by sustaining language, heritage,

and community-based learning (Boit et al., 2021; Makarova & Kassis, 2022; Soriano et al., 2022). Ethical and structural innovation, evident in Ukraine and other disrupted systems, leverages technology, community partnerships, and transparent governance to uphold instruction when physical infrastructure fails (EC, 2022; Eurydice, 2022; Taftaf & Williams, 2020).

V. Education Within Six Host Nations

For displaced learners, arrival in a host country rarely signifies the end of educational disruption (Forced Migration Review, 2019). Instead, it begins a new process of rebuilding identity, language, and trust in unfamiliar systems. Education within these settings becomes a space where trauma healing, cultural sustainability, and systemic innovation intersect. This section examines six host-country contexts: Norway, Canada, Uganda, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands, each illustrating distinct approaches to inclusion grounded in TSP, CSP, and Ethical and Structural Innovation, reflecting global efforts to ensure that *education as care* extends beyond mere survival (EC, 2020; 2022; van Driel, 2020; Wassell & Hawrylak, 2021). At the same time, according to the Eurydice (2022) comparative report, European systems vary widely in their implementation of reception, language supports, and psychosocial services for Ukrainian learners, for example, illustrating the diversity of host-country capacities. Refer to Appendix B for a comparative table on education within these six host nations.

Norway

Norway has established one of the most comprehensive models for refugee education in Europe, emphasizing language continuity, psychosocial well-being, and teacher preparedness (Albamosa, 2024; Moraczewska & Randen, 2024). In Norway, all children have access to education if they have been in the country for 3 months or more, and this can last up to 4 years, according to the Norwegian Education Act. The problem for asylum seekers is that the length of their stay is unknown (Albamosa, 2024; Kalisha, 2024). The national framework for *Introductory Programs for Newly Arrived Students* integrates transitional bilingual instruction with trauma-informed support (Mathisen & Cele, 2020; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2024). Ukrainian and Syrian learners, for example, receive instruction in Norwegian and their home language to prevent educational loss during linguistic transition (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2024). Schools employ multidisciplinary teams of teachers, social workers, and counselors to provide psychosocial care and learning support. Norway's approach demonstrates how equity and empathy can coexist within policy, creating classrooms that function as bridges between identity and integration.

Canada

Canada's settlement-based education system is grounded in an inclusive ethos that views linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and mental health as essential to learning (Lam, 2019; The CCOPE, 2020). The Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program connects families, educators, and community agencies to ensure coordinated academic, emotional, and social support for refugee and immigrant students (Government of Canada, 2023). In 2024, Global Affairs Canada announced continued investment through Phase II of the Refugee Education Council, an initiative that amplifies refugee-led perspectives in shaping education policy and practice across global and domestic contexts (Global Affairs Canada, 2024). This effort complements community-based programs such as Plan International Canada's Refugee Education and Development (READ) Project, which enhances access to quality education for displaced and conflict-affected children through teacher training, gender equity initiatives, and psychosocial support (Plan International Canada, 2024).

Many provinces, including Ontario and British Columbia, have adopted trauma-informed frameworks emphasizing emotional regulation, inclusive partnerships, and culturally sustaining

curriculum design. Canada's English as an Additional Language (EAL) and heritage language programs further promote multilingual competence and affirm students' cultural and linguistic identities (Government of Canada. (2023). Together, these policies and initiatives exemplify *education as care* within a national framework that integrates trauma-sensitive and culturally sustaining practices, linking structural equity to ethical responsibility and human dignity. Soriano et al. (2022) show that learning communities significantly improve educational and social inclusion outcomes by fostering collective participation, shared responsibility, and school–community engagement.

Uganda

Uganda's refugee education model is widely recognized as one of the most progressive in the world, anchored in a national policy that integrates refugees within the public education system rather than creating separate or parallel structures. Under the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP-II, 2021–2025), both refugee and national children share schools, curricula, and resources, fostering social cohesion and equality (UNHCR, 2024a). As one of the largest refugee-hosting nations, Uganda provides education to more than 800,000 refugee learners across 14 districts, supported by government agencies and international partners (Education Cannot Wait, 2024b). UNESCO (2024a) reports that Uganda's approach has achieved one of the highest rates of refugee inclusion in national education systems globally, ensuring that refugee students account for over 70 percent of enrollments in public primary schools in settlement areas.

Through the ERP-II framework, schools are equipped with teacher training, accelerated learning programs, and infrastructure improvements that benefit host and refugee communities. Teachers in these regions receive training in inclusive pedagogy, psychosocial support, and multilingual instruction, ensuring that trauma-sensitive and culturally sustaining practices are embedded in classroom life. Uganda demonstrates how ethical and structural innovation can thrive even in resource-constrained environments, where community participation and transparent governance transform education into a shared pathway for peace and resilience.

Australia

Australia's refugee education framework integrates settlement services with trauma-informed and multicultural schooling to ensure continuity, belonging, and well-being for students from refugee backgrounds. The *Refugee Education Support Program (RESP)*, developed by Foundation House in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education, offers a comprehensive approach that enhances teacher capacity, fosters family engagement, and strengthens school-community collaboration to support recovery and inclusion (Foundation House, 2024). The Victorian Department of Education (2024) also emphasizes that schools play a vital role in helping refugee students settle by addressing the psychological and social effects of trauma and their academic needs.

Across states, initiatives such as STARTTS (NSW) and the Foundation House Schools Support Program offer trauma recovery counseling, staff training, and classroom strategies that nurture safety, trust, and cultural responsiveness. Schools integrate English language acquisition with social-emotional learning and employ bridging programs that help newly arrived students transition into mainstream classrooms. The national education policy prioritizes social inclusion, intercultural understanding, and mental health support within the Australian Curriculum, ensuring that care is integrated into pedagogy and practice (Australian Department of Education, 2019; 2022; Foundation House, 2024). This model operates *education as care* through coordinated systems that view learning as a process of intellectual growth and emotional restoration, reaffirming the centrality of compassion and community in educational recovery.

Germany

Germany's response to the arrival of more than one million refugees since 2015 has become one of the most ambitious educational inclusion initiatives in Europe. Federal and state governments developed welcome classes that provide intensive German language instruction, psychosocial counselling, and cultural orientation for newly arrived learners (Immigration Policy Lab, 2024). Over time, most states have shifted from preparatory programs to full integration models, in which refugee and local students attend mainstream schools after an introductory period. According to the European Commission's Youth Wiki (2024), Germany's approach emphasizes social inclusion through equitable access, language support, and vocational training as primary pathways to participation. Research by Altinkalp et al. (2022) further notes that Germany's inclusive education framework prioritizes teacher professional development in multicultural pedagogy, ensuring that educators are equipped to meet the linguistic and social needs of refugee learners.

Schools are increasingly embedding intercultural teacher training and recognizing prior learning for refugee students (Asylum Information Database, 2025). Despite persistent challenges such as teacher shortages, regional disparities, and administrative complexity, Germany's evolving system exemplifies culturally sustaining pedagogy grounded in equity, care, and transparent governance. Makarova and Kassis (2022) identify school belonging, structured language support, and teacher expectations as central predictors of the academic success of refugee and migrant learners, reinforcing the importance of culturally sustaining and ethically grounded host-country systems. These examples demonstrate how educational structures can function as instruments of integration, healing, and mutual understanding within a multicultural democracy.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has implemented an equity-centered model of refugee and migrant education that blends linguistic inclusion with social integration. The Language and Integration Programmes (NT2) provide structured Dutch-language instruction while supporting home-language maintenance across primary and secondary schools (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2024). Pathways into vocational and higher education are expanded through collaborations with organizations such as the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), ensuring continuity across educational stages. Janta et al. (2022) note that the Dutch model embeds language learning within broader well-being and inclusion efforts, supported by teacher intercultural training and inclusive pedagogies that strengthen belonging, cultural awareness, and equitable opportunity.

Across host-nation contexts, the three interconnected dimensions in this study further affirm *education as care*. Trauma-sensitive pedagogy ensures emotional safety and psychosocial readiness, visible in Canada's trauma-informed approaches and Norway's psychosocial integration supports (Makarova & Kassis, 2022; Wassell & Hawrylak, 2021). Culturally sustaining pedagogy protects learners' languages, traditions, and identities, evident in Uganda's shared classroom approaches (Soriano et al., 2022) and the Netherlands' bilingual pathways (Makarova & Kassis, 2022). Ethical and Structural Innovation anchors these practices through transparency, accountability, and inclusive system design, reflected in Germany's structured governance (Eurydice, 2022) and Australia's holistic settlement programs (Aiello et al., 2025).

VI. Policy and Ethical Responsibility: Governance, Transparency, and Care

Education in conflict and displacement demonstrates that classroom practice depends on the strength of broader governance structures, since transparent, participatory, and community-centered systems enable trauma-informed and culturally sustaining pedagogies to be effective. Research shows that

fragmented or short-term humanitarian responses undermine long-term learning, while collaborative governance among teachers, communities, and displaced learners supports sustainability and cultural relevance (Lembke et al., 2024; Menashy & Zakharia, 2023). Global frameworks underscore this: UNESCO IIEP and the Open Government Partnership emphasize transparency, open school data, and local ownership as essential for trust and accountability (Open Government Partnership, 2025; UNESCO IIEP, 2025).

Grek (2022) notes that the Sustainable Development Goals redirect education systems toward equity, cultural inclusion, and well-being, positioning governance as a form of care. Ethical and conceptual work reinforces that these commitments are moral obligations rather than administrative requirements (El Asad, 2025), while critical and decolonial scholarship highlights the racial, colonial, and epistemic injustices embedded in global education systems (Arat Koc, 2020; Oddy, 2024; Singh et al., 2025; Vasist & Krishnan, 2022). Visual, participatory, and arts-based methodologies further argue for research approaches that position displaced communities as co-producers of knowledge and policy (Diab, 2025; Jay, 2025; Shah et al., 2024; Vecchio et al., 2020).

Within the *education as care* framework, leadership research shows that locally grounded, relational, and collaborative decision-making is essential for crisis-affected systems to adapt and thrive (Mitchell et al., 2025). Sustainable and empowerment-focused models illustrate that care-centered systems emerge when policies align with community engagement and culturally rooted practices (Minescu, 2023; Soe et al., 2024). Evidence from immigrant parental engagement similarly underscores the importance of participatory planning and policy consultation as foundational to equitable and responsive governance (Park, 2025).

VII. From Reform to Transformation

Empowerment in displacement emerges when care-based reforms strengthen both system-wide structures and individual agency, shifting education from crisis management to the creation of conditions for cultural identity, autonomy, and future opportunity. Scholars emphasize that meaningful change is relational and institution-based, requiring attention to the social, emotional, and cultural dimensions of learning (Shah et al., 2024; Soe et al., 2024). A central driver of this empowerment is the agency of displaced teachers, who reconstruct learning environments in temporary buildings, community centers, and informal settings. Their practices reflect strength, dignity, and care, often disrupting the status quo through trauma-sensitive and culturally relevant approaches that center student identity and well-being (Keser Ozmantar et al., 2023). Students themselves reclaim identity through multilingual storytelling, mother-tongue education, and arts-based learning such as poetics, murals, theatre-making, and digital storytelling, which support trauma processing and cultural continuity across contexts, including Uganda and Europe (Jay, 2025; Vasist & Krishnan, 2022).

Systemically, empowerment expands when states and schools recognize refugee cultural expertise, including displaced communities in decision-making, and widen access to higher education, employment, and civic participation (Minescu, 2023; Soe et al., 2024). These reforms must be embedded into teacher preparation, curriculum design, and school leadership to ensure trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive practices become standard rather than exceptional features of education systems. Empowerment is strongest when it converges with care, ethics, and creativity, as trauma-sensitive approaches provide stability while culturally responsive frameworks elevate identity and agency (Lembke et al., 2024). Ethical grounding is equally necessary for innovations such as hybrid learning, accelerated education, and technology-enabled models to reinforce continuity (Menashy & Zakharia, 2023). Case studies illustrate these dynamics: young refugees in Lebanon use photography and narrative inquiry to document community resilience (Yoshikawa et al., 2022), bilingual practices in Norway and Canada empower

learners as cultural brokers (Perez Peguero, 2024), and community schools in Uganda enhance girls' participation in governance and gender-inclusive norms (Yoshikawa et al., 2022).

VIII. Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

Drawing on global evidence from education in emergencies and protracted crises, it is important to consider the implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers committed to shifting from crisis management toward systemic, care-centered educational transformation. Grounded in the *Education as Care* model and in relational, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed pedagogy, the literature suggests that learning must be reclaimed as an empowering and dignifying site of belonging rather than merely a mechanism for preserving access (Wilkinson & Kauko, 2020). These implications serve as a guide for strengthening practice, governance, and research across displacement contexts.

Implications for Educators

Teachers are central to equitable schooling in host nations and conflict-affected settings. Studies show that trauma-sensitive instruction increases emotional safety, supports self-regulation, and improves learning for students experiencing displacement-related stress (Boukhari, 2025). Incorporating relational routines, predictable structures, and social-emotional support helps rebuild the stability many students have lost. Evidence from Europe, East Africa, and the Middle East indicates that when educators acknowledge linguistic and cultural backgrounds, integrate them into curriculum design, and adapt materials to local contexts, displaced learners show stronger engagement and connection (Kaur & Szorenyi, 2020).

Implications for Policymakers

Research consistently finds that policies created without community consultation, teacher input, or transparency often fail to be implemented and produce uneven access (Park, 2025). Governments designing curriculum, language-of-instruction policies, and integration plans must adopt institutional approaches that engage teachers, families, and displaced communities. Open and inclusive policymaking builds trust, particularly for families who may distrust state institutions due to past persecution. Inter-sectoral coordination between education, health, mental health, and social services is also essential since fragmented systems undermine learning continuity and delay the identification of trauma and socioeconomic challenges. Evidence from Canada and other settings shows that integrated service models can support displaced students' return to mainstream schooling and improve overall educational delivery (Government of Canada, 2023; Kaufmann, 2021; Foundation House, 2023, 2024).

Implications for Researchers

There is a clear need for large-scale, longitudinal, and comparative research that examines the educational trajectories of displaced learners across diverse political and cultural contexts (Kuzhabekova & Nardon, 2023). Little is known about how schooling unfolds from the point of conflict to arrival in host countries, underscoring the importance of transnational studies across different regions. Engaging displaced teachers and students as co-researchers is also crucial, as excluding their perspectives reinforces cognitive injustice and deficit narratives (Arat-Koc, 2020). Participatory, feminist, decolonial, and community-based methodologies strengthen ethical practice by amplifying marginalized voices and promoting ownership (Arat-Koc, 2020; Diab, 2025; Keser Ozmantar et al., 2023). Narrative research, longitudinal ethnography, and participatory action research can illuminate how care, resilience, and innovation emerge in crisis-affected school systems and help shift the field from reactive reform toward proactive empowerment (Jay, 2025; Vecchio et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2022).

IX. Conclusion

Continuity in education is not achieved simply by reopening schools, but by restoring humanity. For learners displaced by war, persecution, and instability, education becomes the thread that binds survival to hope, transforming chaos into meaning. Sustaining learning in crisis requires moral courage and collective responsibility to create environments that are trauma-sensitive, culturally sustaining, ethical, and innovative. In this sense, education becomes a life-affirming act that anchors healing, restores dignity, and reaffirms each learner's inherent worth. It is through this shared commitment that education moves beyond instruction and becomes a pathway toward renewed possibilities.

Across conflict-affected and host-nation contexts, education functions as both a bridge and a continuum of care. In places such as Syria, Gaza, and Sudan, teachers use trauma-sensitive practices to create sanctuaries of safety, offering structure amid uncertainty. In host nations such as Norway, Canada, and Uganda, culturally sustaining and equitable systems transform access into belonging, supporting the continuity of identity for displaced learners. These settings reveal that continuity is relational and deeply human, achieved when emotional recovery, cultural affirmation, and structural justice come together to stabilize learning pathways.

Education as care operates as both a pedagogical stance and a governance principle. When classroom practice and policy leadership are grounded in transparency, compassion, and justice, education becomes transformative rather than compensatory. Displaced learners are then recognized as bearers of knowledge and resilience, and schools become spaces where belonging replaces marginalization and agency replaces dependency. The journey from crisis to continuity requires reimagining education as moral resistance, where equity becomes an obligation and learning becomes a force for rebuilding, empowerment, and global solidarity.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Y.A., an educator from Syria whose courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to learning inspire our understanding of what *education as care* truly means. His journey from the classroom in Syria to rebuilding his future in Norway is a powerful reminder that hope, dignity, and the pursuit of knowledge endure even in displacement.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no competing interests. This research was conducted independently, without external influence, funding, or obligations to any organization, institution, or individual that could be perceived as a conflict.

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