



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY

Waganesh A. Zeleke,
Virginia Commonwealth University,
United States

REVIEWED BY

Yaswinda Yaswinda,
Padang State University, Indonesia
Agus Ruswandi,
Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia

*CORRESPONDENCE

Sindew Asmare Wedi
✉ asmare.sindew@gmail.com

RECEIVED 09 January 2025

ACCEPTED 22 April 2025

PUBLISHED 09 May 2025

CITATION

Shiferaw YG and Wedi SA (2025) The practices and challenges of accelerated educational programs in North Wollo zone, Amhara region, Ethiopia.
Front. Educ. 10:1558188.
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2025.1558188

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Shiferaw and Wedi. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

The practices and challenges of accelerated educational programs in North Wollo zone, Amhara region, Ethiopia

Yimer Gobezie Shiferaw¹ and Sindew Asmare Wedi^{1,2*}

¹Department of Lifelong Learning and Community Development, Woldia University, Woldiya, Ethiopia,

²College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Sociology, Woldia University, Woldiya, Ethiopia

This study aimed to investigate the practices and challenges of the Accelerated Education Program (AEP) in the North Wollo Zone, with a particular focus on its alignment with Speed School guidelines. The research evaluated core programmatic components such as the implementation of teaching-learning activities, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and the prospects of the program's beneficiaries, while also identifying critical barriers affecting its success. A qualitative research approach grounded in the social constructivist paradigm was employed, utilizing a case study design to provide in-depth insight. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, and document reviews. A total of 25 key informants participated, including curriculum team leaders, Speed School Program (SSP) focal persons, school directors, supervisors, teachers, and students. Thematic analysis was applied, and results were presented narratively. The study found that both ALFA and adoption classes completed their instructional activities within the prescribed ten-month timeframe, though daily schedules varied by school. Preliminary activities, including stakeholder validation workshops, were conducted at multiple administrative levels. However, the program encountered serious financial limitations such as delayed fund disbursement, insufficient training budgets, and lack of incentives for implementers. Regarding SHGs, 315 out of 375 targeted mothers (84%) participated, contributing to a total savings and project fund of ETB 172,875, which supported small-scale income-generating projects like livestock and poultry production. Teachers noted that SHGs enhanced not only household income but also parent collaboration and engagement in education. The findings highlight both the potential and fragility of the Accelerated Education Program. While the program has demonstrated promising outcomes in community engagement and student reintegration, its long-term success is threatened by funding and coordination challenges. It is recommended that stakeholders view the Speed School as a strategic intervention aligned with national education and development goals. Strengthened partnerships, community dialogue on the importance of education, and the establishment of robust, well-funded social protection mechanisms are critical to sustaining the program and addressing the needs of out-of-school children.

KEYWORDS

practices and challenges, accelerated education, curriculum review, educational program, accelerated program

1 Introduction

Education is a basic human right and the best investment for a sustainable future that leaves no one behind; however, millions are deprived of educational opportunities every day, often as a result of social, cultural, and economic factors (Moumne et al., 2019). The right to education requires equal access to quality education for all, free from discrimination. Yet, out-of-school and dropout rates

remain stubbornly high, with marginalized groups disproportionately excluded from education (Moumne et al., 2019). Access to education is not just about enrolling children; it is about keeping them in school so they can benefit fully. In addition to providing access through the provision of free education, states must institute targeted measures to prevent at-risk students from dropping out (Moumne et al., 2019).

Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) have emerged as crucial interventions for out-of-school children, offering flexible, age-appropriate education tailored to their needs (Accelerated Education Working Group, 2020; Myers and Pinnock, 2016). Studies have demonstrated the positive impact of such programs on reintegration and learning outcomes, particularly in low-resource contexts like sub-Saharan Africa (Akyeampong et al., 2016, 2020; Waltham et al., 2015). In Ethiopia, AEPs—especially the Speed School model—have been instrumental in addressing educational exclusion, although implementation challenges persist (MoE and UNICEF, 2012; Shiferaw, 2023). Financial constraints, coordination issues, and limited training are common bottlenecks (UNICEF and UIS, 2016; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). Effective qualitative inquiry, supported by document reviews, interviews, and FGDs, is essential to understanding the lived realities of stakeholders and improving program delivery (Bowen, 2009; Shah, 2015; Okesina, 2020). Moreover, consistent engagement with communities and local governance structures remains key to ensuring sustainability and inclusivity in AEP delivery (UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF, 2015; UNICEF and UNESCO, 2007; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2022). International human rights law (IHRL) requires states to ensure that the right to education is economically accessible through two primary measures: the introduction of free and compulsory education and the reduction of dropout rates (Moumne et al., 2019).

Various programming options can be implemented for disadvantaged out-of-school children and youth. It is critical for programs to consider the various goals and targets of different types to choose the most appropriate intervention for a specific situation (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). Suitable responses include bridging programs, remedial programs, catch-up programs, Accelerated Education Programs, alternative basic education, and Speed Schools [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), 2020]. Alternative basic education programs are crucial as a short-term emergency measure for achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015 and for reaching remote rural communities, pastoralists, and semi-agriculturalist societies (Ministry of Education, 2005). Alternative Basic Education is a school equivalency program for children aged 7–14, allowing learners to cover the equivalent of the first four grades of primary school in 3 years and then transition into the formal system (Ministry of Education, 2010).

In Ethiopia, the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) program was introduced in 2004 as an educational strategy to improve access to and promote quality education for over-aged out-of-school children aged 7–14 years. The program is run by the Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) in collaboration with various international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the community (Onwu and Agu, 2010). An Accelerated Education Program is little distinction between Alternative Basic Education, Non-Formal Education (NFE), Extension Programs, and Adult Functional Literacy Programs (Onwu and Agu, 2010). An accelerated education program is a flexible, age-appropriate program run within an accelerated timeframe, aimed at providing education access for disadvantaged, over-aged, out-of-school children and youth, including those whose education was interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, conflict, or crisis (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). The goal of Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education through effective teaching and learning approaches that align with their cognitive maturity (Shah and Choo, 2020).

AEPs typically address critical gaps in essential educational services for crisis- and conflict-affected populations, ensuring learners receive appropriate and relevant education responsive to their life circumstances (Menéndez, 2016).

Accelerated Education (AE) programming is one of several complementary or alternative mechanisms for reaching populations underserved by the formal education system in the first instance (Shah et al., 2017). For children and young people who have missed education or had their education interrupted by conflict, crisis, poverty, or marginalization, AEPs offer a way to fulfill global education commitments by providing equivalent, certified competencies for basic education, enabling a return to formal education at age-appropriate grades, or facilitating transitions into work or other training (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). These alternative or complementary education programs exist in various forms worldwide and under diverse labels. For instance, in Ethiopia, they are referred to as Speed Schools, while in Ghana and Malawi, they are known as Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programs (Randall et al., 2020). The Speed Schools Program in Ethiopia, funded by Legatum and managed by Geneva Global, was introduced in 2011 in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR; Akyeampong et al., 2018). The program operates as follows: students who have dropped out of government primary schools without acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, along with a few who have never attended school, are selected to undertake an intensive 10-month literacy and numeracy program (Akyeampong et al., 2018).

The Speed School system represents a partnership among parents, schools, and communities on behalf of out-of-school children (OOSC), aiming to empower each child with skills, knowledge, and character for lifelong learning, enabling OOSC to join the formal school system after completing the program. Speed School employs an accelerated learning approach—an effective process that uses active learning strategies to make learning more natural, easier, and faster (The Luminos Fund, 2017). Speed School is an Accelerated Education Program implemented by Geneva Global and funded by private donors, aiming to help out-of-school children reenter the formal school system by condensing 3 years of primary school content into 10 months (Lowden, 2019).

The Ethiopia Speed School program aims to enroll children aged 9 to 14 who have never attended school or who have dropped out of primary school into an accelerated program that covers 3 years of content in 1 year. The Speed School model employs accelerated learning principles (ALP) and a condensed curriculum (The Luminos Fund, 2017). In its country of implementation, the Speed School model utilizes a condensed version of the national primary school curriculum (The Luminos Fund, 2017), focusing on the literacy and numeracy competencies required during the first cycle of primary education (Grades 1–4). While based on national curriculum standards, each Speed School program is implemented differently in each context (The Luminos Fund, 2017).

The accelerated Speed School class prepares students to join (or rejoin) their peers in Grade 4 by equipping them with the core knowledge and skills found in the official government curriculum for Grades 1 to 3. Enrollment and participation in Speed School are completely free, except for any opportunity costs (Geneva Global, 2021). Simply put, Speed School is a model that integrates an Accelerated Education Program with a community development approach to provide out-of-school children aged 9 to 14 with a second chance at formal primary education (Geneva Global, 2021).

In recent years, thousands of previously out-of-school Ethiopian children have participated in the program, which operates in collaboration with local public schools (Mengistie et al., 2017). In

Ethiopia, during the 2017/18 school year, there were 32 government-run Accelerated Learning classes in Tigray; by 2018/19, this number had increased to 110 ALP classes across three regions (Tigray, SNNPR, and Oromia; [Lowden, 2019](#)). In the Amhara region, there were 4,200 ALFA class pupils in 2017/2018 and 360 ALP classes in 2019/2020. In SNNPR, there were 130,000 ALFA class pupils in 2011/12 and 1,620 ALP class pupils in 2018/19. In 2019/20, Addis Ababa had three ALP classes. In Tigray, there were 21,700 ALFA pupils in 2013/14 and 3,360 ALP pupils in 2017/18. In Oromia, there were 34,600 ALFA class pupils in 2014/15 and 6,600 ALP class pupils in 2017/18 ([Geneva Global, 2021](#)).

[Shah and Choo \(2020\)](#), in their *Accelerated Education Evidence Review: Strengthening the Evidence Base for Accelerated Education* conducted at the University of Auckland, show that in countries with high numbers of OOSCY, AEPs provide access to many over-aged, disadvantaged children and youth who might otherwise lack opportunities for certified learning. However, in most contexts, they continue to serve only a relatively small percentage of the total OOSCY population.

[Oddy \(2019\)](#) conducted a study on Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) in Uganda, exploring the experiences of children, families, teachers, and educational stakeholders. The study shows that children perceive AEP as higher quality and more inclusive; its flexible timetable allows for part-time work, and importantly, there are no financial costs associated with participation. Additionally, the program's shortened duration provides little incentive for children to transition back into the formal primary school system.

[Rauchwerk \(2017\)](#), in a study conducted in the United States titled *Learning Through Play in Speed School: An International Accelerated Learning Program*, found that Speed School facilitators and learning environments promoting constructivist play pedagogy support outcomes such as knowledge acquisition, relationship-building, social engagement, idea exploration, and skill development.

There are still gaps unexplored in previous studies, both geographical and methodological. Geographically, prior research has limitations as no studies have been conducted in the target area. This study is uniquely comparative in nature, selecting two schools with relatively similar contexts to enable meaningful comparison, and seeks to explore the practice, effectiveness, challenges, and prospects of Accelerated Education Programs in the study area (ALFA school class and government-adopted school class). The researcher's personal experience in the study area is another significant reason for conducting this research. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a case study. Therefore, this research aims to address the following previously unexplored questions and paradigms:

1. How is the Accelerated Education Program practiced in the study area?
 - 1.1 How is the Accelerated Education Program aligned with the school calendar?
 - 1.2 How is the curriculum of the Accelerated Education Program condensed?
 - 1.3 How is the program launched, and how are teachers, students, and schools selected and recruited?
 - 1.4 What types of learning materials, assessments, and teaching methodologies are used in the Accelerated Education Program?
2. How effective is the Accelerated Education Program in enhancing parents' participation in Self-Help Groups and income-generating activities in the study area?
3. What are the major challenges hindering the effectiveness of the Accelerated Education Program in the study area?
4. What are the prospects of the Accelerated Education Program in the study area?

2 Theoretical framework

To access education for out-of-school children, building flexibility into programs in terms of time, location, and delivery modality is more appropriate. Flexibility in education is a consistent need for adolescents and youth in crisis- and conflict-affected contexts worldwide, as many interrelated factors impact their ability to access education ([Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\), 2020](#)). Education programs that offer flexible scheduling, locations, and entry/exit points may increase overall access and attendance ([Ngware et al., 2018](#)). Therefore, implementers should consider factors affecting out-of-school children, such as household responsibilities, the need to support their families by engaging in income-generating activities, and the location of education programs, which also requires flexibility as the availability of physical space restricts where, when, and how classes can be held—this is especially true for pastoralist and remote rural areas. Are designed to promote access to education in an accelerated timeframe for out-of-school, disadvantaged, over-age children and youth who have missed or had their education interrupted due to crisis, conflict, poverty, and marginalization. AEPs are as diverse as the contexts they respond to ([Menéndez, 2016](#)). [Myers and Pinnock \(2017\)](#) stated that AEPs provide flexible opportunities to study a condensed curriculum that enables transition into mainstream, formal schooling or provides recognized and relevant certification and skills for the labor market. To meet the needs of learners, AEP curricula, materials, and pedagogy often differ from those of formal schools. AEP curricula are condensed, often omitting non-core subjects and repetition while focusing on literacy and mathematics. AEPs must be inclusive of all learners. Teachers, learners, and community members should identify obstacles to school participation, giving additional attention to challenges faced by learners with special needs, who are at a higher risk of exclusion. AEPs may recruit different types of teachers: local untrained educators; individuals with experience in other fields, such as community development and health; retired formal school teachers; employed formal school teachers who can take on a second shift; teachers from host communities; and those certified nationally or in their home country. AEPs should strive to offer a continuous professional development programs relevant to their teachers and beneficial to the broader workforce and education system, while considering what is feasible given their opportunities and challenges. AEPs should be anchored in national budgets and effectively managed in alignment with programmatic goals. Concentrated efforts to maintain and increase community support for AEPs is critical to sustaining the program in the future and ensuring community members send their children to school and keep them there. Program monitoring should promote community accountability. AEPs should negotiate agreements with the Ministry of Education and schools for the accreditation necessary to certify AEP learners' achievements, facilitating their entry into the formal education system, training, or employment. AEPs

should be integrated into the broader education system and recognized by the government or relevant education authority.

2.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory, developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s, has emerged as a prominent qualitative research methodology aimed at generating theory from empirical data. Its unique inductive approach sets it apart from traditional deductive methods, allowing researchers to explore complex social processes and phenomena. In the education sector, grounded theory has been used to examine and understand teacher–student interactions and the dynamics of classroom environments in the school setting (Denzin, 2019). In nursing, researchers have applied grounded theory to understand the complexities of patient care and the relationships between healthcare providers and patients (Glaser, 2008). These diverse applications highlight the method's versatility and its ability to uncover rich, context-specific insights. Grounded theory is well suited for studying learning, cognition, and classroom interactions and processes between teachers and students. It is compatible with different epistemological views used by academic researchers, including constructivism, critical approaches, and post-positivism (Birks and Mills, 2015; Denzin, 2019). Research on teaching and learning uses various data sources, including verbal data, observations, and test results, and grounded theory is compatible with a wide variety of data sources, including quantitative data (i.e., Holton and Walsh, 2017; Glaser, 2008). Its emergent design and theoretical sampling provide flexibility, making grounded theory useful in academic studies where access to participants and classrooms often varies. Grounded theory analytical methods are compatible with several qualitative research methodologies, including ethnography, case study, narrative, and phenomenology (Birks and Mills, 2015; Timmermans and Tavory, 2007), all commonly used in academic settings. However, it should be noted that some grounded theory methodologists criticize decoupling grounded theory analytical techniques from the methodology in its entirety. Glaser (2002), in particular, refers to such approaches as “qualitative data analysis” and argues that these studies should not be considered grounded theory research at all.

3 Methods

3.1 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was deployed in this study to assess the practice, effectiveness, prospects, and challenges of implementing the Accelerated Education Program. The main reason for using qualitative methods is to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals or groups facing a social or human problem. Creswell (2014) stated that the qualitative research approach is important for exploring emerging questions and procedures, with data typically collected in participants' settings and analyzed inductively, building from particulars to general themes. The literature also states that qualitative research focuses on collecting data about human life observations, realities, experiences, behaviors, emotions, feelings, and their interactions with nature. Hence, this research approach helps researchers to investigate how AEPs are delivered in line with the

principles or guidelines of AEPs, how the AEP is effective on parental involvement in SHGs, the major challenges to AEP implementation, and the prospects for AEP in the studied areas.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, gathering data through semi-structured interviews, observation checklists, focus group discussions (FGDs), and secondary documents. As a result, I spent a significant amount of time with Speed School teachers, woreda education office experts—particularly the curriculum development and implementation team leaders—focal persons of the SSP at woreda, zone, and regional levels, and former SSP students, particularly those in grades four and six. I also collected qualitative data through document review.

3.2 Research design

There are various research designs postulated by researchers to meet different purposes within different study contexts. Creswell (2007a) suggested that qualitative research includes narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The investigator aimed to examine how the AEPs are implemented in line with the principles/guidelines of AEP, the effectiveness of the program, the challenges to implementation, and the prospects of the program, beginning with exploration and in-depth analysis using qualitative data and analysis in the investigated area. Additionally, the investigator argued that a case study is essential to understand whether the program has been implemented in line with the principles/guidelines of AEP/SSP, its effectiveness, challenges to implementation, and future prospects. A case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007b). Similarly, Creswell (2009) noted that case studies are a strategy of inquiry where the researcher explores a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in depth. The intended research focused on AE program implementers in line with the Accelerated Education Program principles, with the investigator gathering data from respondents using different data collection instruments.

3.3 Population, sample, and sampling techniques

In the selected woredas (Raya Kobo and Habru), there were 1,080 ALFA class students enrolled in 2011 E.C., 720 ALFA class students in 2012 E.C., and 375 ALFA class students in 2013 E.C. The number of schools in those woredas was 40, 25, and 15, respectively, in the same years, with the number of teachers also proportional to each school: 40, 25, and 15, respectively.

Twenty curriculum preparation and implementation team experts, seven curriculum preparation and implementation team experts, 16 curriculum preparation and implementation team experts, and three SSP project coordinators were working at the regional, zone, woreda, and SSP project coordinator office levels, respectively. In the 2014 school year, there were 10 SSP schools in Raya Kobo woreda and 7 SSP schools in Habru woreda.

Among 17 Speed Schools, the researcher selected two: one from government adoption classes and the other from ALFA classes, located in Habru and Raya Kobo woredas, respectively. The rationale for choosing these two programs was to compare the implementation of government adoption and ALFA classes in the study areas. From 31 former Speed School students in grades six and four, eight students were selected through available sampling to participate in FGDs. Of the eight SSP teachers, six were also selected through available sampling. Among 46 participants at the regional, zonal, and woreda levels—including curriculum preparation and implementation teams and SSP focal persons—seven were selected through purposive sampling. The researcher's rationale for selecting SSP focal persons at these levels, along with woreda curriculum preparation and implementation team leaders, was that they were the most useful or representative for this study. Both ALFA class schools and government adoption programs had a single supervisor and director, who were included as research participants.

No	Participants/respondents	Population	Sample size	Techniques
1	CPI team leaders and SSP focal persons	46	7	Purposive
2	Directors	2	2	Comprehensive
3	Supervisor	2	2	Comprehensive
4	Teachers	8	6	Available
5	Students	31	8	Available

3.4 Data collection instruments

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and document review as instruments. Semi-structured interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions depending on the research topics (Mathers et al., 1998). The investigator conducted interviews with woreda education office curriculum preparation and implementation team leaders, SSP focal persons at regional, zonal, and woreda levels, as well as SSP teachers, supervisors, and directors. Based on the Speed School guidelines, the researcher developed 16 interview questions for teachers, school directors, and supervisors, and 21 questions for curriculum preparation and implementation team leaders and focal persons at the regional, zonal, and woreda levels. These tools helped the researcher understand how the Accelerated Education Program/SSP is being implemented in accordance with the principles of the Accelerated Education Program/Speed School Program guidelines, the major challenges hindering the implementation process, and the prospects of the program in the study areas.

A focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method and data collection technique where a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, guided by a professional, external moderator (Eeuwijk and Angehrn, 2017). The researcher developed 17 open-ended FGD questions for former Speed School program students. The primary aim of this tool was to understand the outcomes and impacts of the Speed School program on students and their parents—particularly because the parents joined SHGs—the main challenges

hindering the implementation of the program, and the acceptance of the Speed School program by both parents and students in particular, and the school community at large. The investigator organized two groups, one in each school. FGD participants sat in a circle within their respective schools, discussing the issues in detail, with the investigator participating and clarifying key points as needed. This tool helped the researcher understand the extent of parental involvement in SHG activities and students' perceptions of the implementation of the Speed School program.

Observation is used to evaluate performance, interests, attitudes, and values regarding life problems and situations (Pandey, 2015). The investigator created observation checklists based on the Speed School guidelines. Observation is important for understanding the dynamics in the studied areas, how respondents react to the phenomena occurring there, and comparing the actual implementation of AEP/SSP in the study areas with the results achieved through this program. The researcher observed the Speed School is provided, the facilitation sessions in both ALFA and government adoption classes, learners' academic achievements in the Speed School program, classroom arrangements based on classroom activities, teaching and learning aids, activities performed by Self-Help Groups, major challenges faced in the implementation of the Speed School program, and interactions between Speed School teachers, link schools, and head teachers. In this study, the researcher acted as both a participant observer and a non-participant observer.

In doing so, the researcher addressed the following basic research questions: How is the Accelerated Education Program being practiced? What is the effectiveness of the Accelerated Education Program on parental involvement in SHGs? What are the prospects of the AE program? What are the major challenges hindering the implementation of AEP/SSP in the study areas?

The researcher reviewed documents, including detailed photographs, to understand student performance and the activities conducted over the past 2–3 years within the program. The primary purpose of the document review was to collect qualitative data, which helped the researcher understand the extent to which students achieved academically and the activities carried out by parents in the SHGs.

3.5 Data analysis techniques

The investigator aimed to answer the research questions proposed in this study, focusing on the implementation and effectiveness of AEP, the challenges to its implementation, and its prospects in the studied areas. The collected data was prepared (classified, organized, and summarized into related themes) based on each data-gathering instrument. The investigator first reviewed the recorded notes, carefully transcribed the audio data, categorized it, and grouped all transcribed data according to the same issues and themes identified through interviews, FGDs, documents, and observations before analysis. Then, the investigator presented the findings in narrative form under each theme. Following this, the researcher discussed the results in relation to existing literature.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues in research require increasing attention today, and the necessary ethical considerations are extensive. They are reflected

throughout the research process and apply to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research at all stages (Creswell, 2014).

The investigator informed participants at all levels about the purposes of the study. Participants were informed that there would be no benefit or threat associated with their participation. The investigator was also confident that no harm would come to participants as a result of their participation. All data collected from participants during this study were kept confidential, and the anonymity of the participants was maintained. The investigator referred to woreda education office experts, teachers, supervisors, directors, focal persons, students (learners), Regional Education Bureau curriculum experts, and zone education curriculum experts. Therefore, participants' names were not disclosed.

4 Data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results

4.1 Practice of accelerated education program

4.1.1 Curriculum condensation system of accelerated education

From the interview conversations and FGDs, participants said, “The curriculum of the speed school class was a three-year curriculum condensed into a one-year curriculum, including all relevant content from grades one to three. Then, learners can join grade four.” Both the government-adopted speed school class and the ALFA class used this condensed curriculum for the teaching and learning process, as provided by the Amhara Regional Education Bureau.

In relation to the condensation system of the speed school class, one of the focal persons stated that.

“To condense the curriculum of the speed school contents and syllabi, there were precondition activities before implementation. These included a validation workshop that involved individuals at all levels of the education system—woreda, zone, and region—under the responsibility of the Amhara Regional Education Bureau and with financial support from Geneva Global. Then, different technical team members participated; subject teachers were involved in evaluating the curriculum for each subject. Various academicians from universities, colleges, and partners from the Amhara Development Association were also actively engaged.”

One of the school directors mentioned that.

“At the government school where the ALFA class was implemented, the link school teachers used the condensed curriculum for their teaching and learning process, understanding the effectiveness of the program.”

Therefore, the study found that while both ALFA and government-adopted classes operated within the intended 10-month period, the depth and fidelity of implementation varied significantly. ALFA classes, supported by NGOs, demonstrated better adherence to the Speed School guidelines, while government-adopted classes struggled with inconsistencies due to limited training and planning. Curriculum condensation was implemented as per program design; however,

inconsistencies in teaching schedules and limited support mechanisms affected delivery quality.

4.1.2 Launch/start the accelerated education program

Both the government adoption class and the ALFA class carried out precondition activities before implementing the program. In the ALFA classes, respondents stated that before starting the implementation of the teaching and learning process, several activities were performed. These included training for teachers, woreda, zone, and regional curriculum preparation and implementation teams, focal persons, school directors, and supervisors; accessing learning materials; recruiting teachers with qualifications above diploma level based on recommendations from the Amhara Regional Education Bureau and Woreda Education Offices; and providing training for selected teachers for 5 to 21 days. Additionally, teaching and learning materials were made available for each school, such as colored paper, pencils, A4 printing paper, plastic chairs, pens, notebooks, rulers, scissors, chalk, tape, flash drives, exercise books, and various decorative posters. Project coordinators were also assigned in each woreda.

In the government adoption class, respondents stated that to implement this program, preparations were made in various areas. These included discussions and communication with the school community, parents, and link school teachers; training selected teachers from conventional schools who were more committed, language teachers, and those with greater efficiency; allocating separate classrooms for speed school learners; accessing the condensed curriculum from the Education Office; and addressing the need for learning aids such as reading corners, chairs, mini boards, and locally available materials.

According to participants in the study areas, both Raya Kobo and Habru woredas began implementing the speed school class in 2011 E.C. At the school level, the ALFA class (Elaladima School in Raya Kobo Woreda) was started in 2011 E.C., while the government adoption class (Melkacheffie School in Habru Woreda) began in 2012 E.C. Regarding the launch of the speed school class, the idea for the program originated from Geneva Global. Before the program started, Geneva Global project implementers held discussions with experts from the Regional Education Bureau and Woreda Education Offices and then received permission to proceed. The program began by providing training for woreda education office heads, teachers, school directors, and focal persons from woreda to regional levels.

From the beginning of the program, implementers faced several challenges, particularly related to the attitudes of different stakeholders—teachers, education experts, community members (especially parents), and school directors—who questioned how students could complete a 3-year curriculum in 1 year. Some even associated the program with harming a generation through this educational approach.

In relation to this, one of the participants stated that.

“At the beginning of the program, challenges occurred. Even individuals assigned as education experts defended it blindly, and parents were extremely concerned, associating it with evil. They questioned why their children were learning separately from others, feeling that it discriminated against them and challenged their religious beliefs.”

As stated in the Speed School guidelines, the main actions required to launch the Speed School class fall into three main categories: preparing the classroom, training facilitators and teachers, and enrolling students. However, according to the interview guide, the preparation of the classroom's physical structure, furnishings, and basic learning materials was very limited, especially in the government adoption classes.

4.1.3 Recruitment and selection of accelerated education teachers and schools

From the interviews with the respondents, the selection criteria for Speed School teachers in the ALFA class and government adoption classes varied. One interviewee stated.

"...In the ALFA class, teachers were recruited based on these criteria: teachers should be diploma holders, able to communicate in the local language, agree to the salary scale paid to other diploma teachers, agree that after training they should start the teaching and learning process, and promise to respect the students, school, and community culture. The recruitment process was the responsibility of the ALFA project coordinators. In the government adoption class, the recruitment of teachers was undertaken by the school community, specifically link school teachers. These teachers had to meet the following criteria: they should be qualified in the teaching subjects, especially language teachers; exhibit ethical behavior; have good academic results or efficiency; have experience in teaching and learning methodology; not request additional payment from the school (only receiving the government salary like other teachers); be willing to take training for the Speed School at various times; promise to adhere to the daily classroom learning schedule; and have good communication skills to share the experiences of the Speed School system with other teachers at the link school."

According to the interviewed individuals, at the beginning of the program, grade 10 completers were allowed to teach in the ALFA class. However, following inquiries from the Woreda Education Office and the Amhara Regional Education Bureau to the ALFA class project coordinators, it was decided that below-diploma holders could not teach, and the selection criteria were revised accordingly.

Based on the information from the interviewed individuals, to select teachers for both ALFA classes and government adoption classes, candidates must be diploma holders, preferably language teachers, and ideally residents of the local district. However, the Speed School guideline specifies that teachers can be at least grade 10 completers who are familiar with the local culture, language, religion, and traditions. The investigator discussed this variation with the respondents, who explained that Woreda Education Office experts were reluctant to select grade 10 completers due to concerns about educational quality. As a result, Geneva Global partners and education office experts agreed that diploma-holding language teachers could teach.

4.1.4 Enrollment and recruitment criteria of students for the speed school program

Based on the information from interviews and FGDs with participants, the registration and recruitment of learners for both ALFA classes and government adoption classes shared similar experiences. One respondent noted that the selection, recruitment,

and registration of students in the Speed School classes was a collective responsibility of kebele leaders, school principals, community leaders, and district Woreda Education Office teams responsible for curriculum preparation and implementation. These individuals identified children who met the enrollment criteria. According to the respondents, the criteria required that a child be between 9 and 14 years old; come from the poorest families; have health risks (such as HIV/AIDS); be without parents or have a single parent; be a student who dropped out of school for various reasons; be a displaced child from different regions; and have mothers interested in participating in the Self-Help Group.

Information gathered in the study areas through observation, FGDs, and interviews indicated that both ALFA classes and government adoption classes had similar criteria for recruiting and registering learners, except for the living areas of the students (urban versus rural). In the ALFA class (Raya Kobo, Elaladima Speed School), students aged 9 to 14 came from very poor families, single-parent or no-parent households, had health issues (such as HIV/AIDS), had not had access to education earlier or had dropped out for various reasons, and included displaced children from different regions. These students were exclusively from rural areas, and their parents had committed to participating in the Self-Help Group.

However, in the government adoption class (Habru Woreda, Melka Chifie School), students aged 9 to 14 also came from very poor families, single-parent or no-parent households, had not had access to education earlier or had dropped out for various reasons, and included displaced children from different regions. These students came from both urban and rural areas, and their parents had made a promise to participate in the Self-Help Group.

In relation to the selection and recruitment procedures, one focal person among the respondents stated that.

"Identifying and recruiting students for the Speed School program takes time and commitment from each individual. Over the last four years, there have been limitations in the proper selection and recruitment of targeted learners. To improve this, local education authorities, parents, and communities should take responsibility."

Based on the information from the interviews in the study areas, both government adoption speed school classes and ALFA classes used the same criteria for recruiting students. However, in practice, the government adoption class was not functional in the Self-Help Group with regard to different economic activities, while the speed school guidelines require that both parents must join and participate in the Self-Help Group for students to enroll in a Speed School class.

4.1.5 Training of accelerated education teachers

Both ALFA class and government adoption speed school class teachers received training before starting their teaching. This training was provided at the zone level, both before and during their working time, by selected Geneva Global project experts. In ALFA classes, teachers were trained after being selected and recruited by Amhara Development Association ALFA project coordinators. The training lasted from 5 to 21 days, including refresher courses. Similarly, government adoption speed school class teachers received training after communication with school directors and district woreda education office curriculum experts to access training for selected teachers, especially language teachers. This training, including

refresher training, lasted 3 to 5 days and was conducted by different NGO institutions, including Geneva Global and Imagine 1 Day, supported by UNICEF.

During the interview, one teacher respondent stated that for both the ALFA class and the government adoption speed school class, the training was important for addressing skill gaps, teaching methodology, learner management, and developing social and communication skills. However, the training was provided in a short period of time. “Therefore, training should be continuous and in-depth.”

In relation to the training of teachers, one ALFA class teacher said that...

“Eyewueleh ema [meaning look with attention], I have taken the training about the speed school class program, and I have understood its importance as a whole. Even without expecting any incentives (allowance) from the training providers, I am interested in taking the training. The government or regular class teachers benefited from this program and training by enhancing their capacity and developing social integration.”

From the information provided by the interviewed teachers in the study areas, both ALFA class teachers and government speed school class teachers understood the benefits of training in developing their social, communication, cognitive, and emotional skills. They recommended continuous additional training to strengthen the trained teachers directly, while regular government school teachers also benefited indirectly.

While the speed school guideline states that preparing facilitators for the school year occurs in two main steps—training the trainers (ToT), which includes cluster supervisors, teacher college tutors, and other education agents who will train the facilitators in the second step, and support them throughout the year—respondents indicated that training for the speed school program was neither sufficient nor continuously provided.

4.1.6 Implementation place of the speed school class

From interviews and observations in the study areas, both ALFA classes and government adoption classes were implemented at government schools. When asked why the speed school was conducted at government schools, respondents stated that the program could be held at different locations, such as churches, mosques, tree shadows, or Kebele learning centers. However, discussions with different stakeholders revealed that, for the effectiveness and continuity of the program, government schools were the most convenient places for the teaching and learning process. This was because the program being managed by school directors, supervisors, and woreda education experts, making government schools more preferable for monitoring and evaluating the program.

In the prepared learning classrooms, there was a significant difference between the ALFA class and the government adoption class. ALFA classes were accessed separately for students through the combined efforts of school directors, focal persons at all levels, and professionals from Geneva Global, with full access to learning materials supported by Geneva Global. However, the government adoption class was not prepared separately, lacked access to learning materials, was not attractive to children, and was not well-maintained or convenient. The respondents explained that many external and

internal challenges, including a shortage of classrooms, financial problems to fulfill the learning material needs, and difficulties in collaborating with various education stakeholders at school and regional levels.

The speed school guideline indicates that if they cannot secure a classroom in a government school, they must seek and negotiate other options. Alternative sites for speed school classes have included churches, mosques, community centers, private residences, and government administrative offices. Respondents mentioned that other learning sites were considered for the speed school program. However, to strengthen the monitoring and supervision of the program, it is preferable to conduct the program at government schools.

4.1.7 Speed school classroom setup and atmospheres

From the interview conversations, FGDs, and class observations, Speed School classrooms look, sound, and function differently from most conventional classrooms. Both ALFA and government adoption classes had 25–30 students, with age-appropriate plastic chairs, tables, mini boards, various attractive posted reading materials, activity-based learning materials sourced from local production and donations, and drawings and printed letters and words prepared by teachers and volunteers. Students in both classes were confident and happy with the speed school system, understanding their roles and school disciplines. However, the investigator observed that ALFA classes were much more attractive and convenient than the government adoption speed school classes. Government adoption speed school class teachers indicated that to attract students and furnish the classroom similarly to the ALFA classes, they faced different constraints, including limited availability of learning materials such as paper, a shortage of classrooms, and financial challenges in covering the cost of learning materials.

The speed school guidelines recommend that classrooms look, sound, and function differently from conventional classrooms. The physical appearance should provide evidence that a different approach to teaching and learning. This was true based on the investigator's observations, especially in the ALFA classes, which featured drawings, printed letters, words, and phrases prepared by teachers and provided by Geneva Global, posted on all sides of the walls.

4.1.8 Activities of the self-help group

Based on information from interviewed individuals, FGDs, and observed evidence, the parents of ALFA class students were engaged in various economic activities, including agricultural production through renting agricultural land, raising hens, sheep, and goats, operating tea houses, and opening credit and savings accounts. Both profits and risks were involved. For example, parents purchased goats and sheep on credit, but some unfortunately died. On the other hand, parents also generated profits, especially from agricultural activities such as crop production, vegetables, and fruits.

In relation this, one of the school directors said that...

“In our school, there is an organized self-help group that is registered through the assigned responsible bodies, with a secretary, accountant, and monitor. Parents saved 20 Birr monthly, and the institution (Amhara Credit and Saving Institution) provided credit equal to their savings amount and conducted monitoring and auditing. However, there were parents who were registered but unable to save as members of the self-help group. These parents were

not prohibited from sending their children to the speed school because they were unable to save.”

In relation to this, one of the focal persons said that...

“School principals act as SHG promoters, facilitating mothers to organize, select executive leaders, agree on the amount of savings, set ground rules, and collect the agreed savings amount. The executives then take the saved money to the bank, help design project proposals, and use the saved money to start simple business activities. Principals also teach them basic skills/adult literacy skills.”

According to the document, in the 2013 E.C. school year, of the planned 375 mothers, 315 (84%) of ALFA class children agreed to organize into SHGs and engage in saving. This school year, 15 schools organized SHGs with 315 mothers, who saved ETB 89,625 collectively. The project contributed ETB 83,250, bringing the total capital to ETB 172,291. Due to a strong desire to work together, majority of the mothers agreed to borrow money for those in need for a fixed time. Those who borrowed immediately engaged in various economic activities, such as goat and sheep herding and poultry farming.

From the information provided by interviewed individuals, FGDs, and observations, the parents of government adoption speed school class students were not engaged in many economic activities. However, at the registration and recruitment stage, parents had promised to participate in economic activities. The findings indicate that the parents of ALFA class students were actively engaged in economic activities and experienced a change in their livelihoods. They were encouraged to cooperate with one another. However, the parents of government adoption speed school class students had not yet engaged, although plans exist to involve them in such activities in the future. Therefore, one of the program's most impactful aspects was the engagement of parents—particularly mothers—through SHGs. While 315 out of 375 targeted mothers participated, the significance lies not only in the numbers but in the transformative outcomes. The groups mobilized community savings, which were used for income-generating activities like poultry and livestock production. This economic empowerment helped reduce household financial barriers to schooling and reinforced the importance of education among parents. Furthermore, teachers reported that SHGs strengthened cooperation between families and schools, creating a more supportive learning environment for children.

4.2 Challenges of accelerated education program

From the information provided by the respondents, both ALFA and government adoption speed school classes face challenges that constrain the effectiveness of the program. These challenges include issues related to government stakeholders, teachers, materials, classrooms, parents, transportation, finances, students, and the projects and schools themselves. Both ALFA and government speed school classes face challenges with stakeholders, including low commitment to perform activities in the program, defensive attitudes from education office personnel, collaboration problems, and concerns about how students can complete the curriculum in such a short period of time. There is also resistance to adopting the program and a general lack of attention toward non-formal education.

Regarding stakeholder commitment to the speed school program, one school supervisor stated that.

“To implement the speed school program effectively in our woreda, I have observed challenges from the start of the program up to now. These include the fact that the responsible structures and staff are still relatively new to the model and have not fully adopted the program, even though they are aware of its benefits. Additionally, the education office authorities are not as committed as they should be. They are more familiar with the program as implemented by Geneva Global, but the program requires more collaboration and a stronger commitment from all sectors of education, rather than relying on a single individual or institution.”

Based on information from individuals interviewed in the study areas, both ALFA classes and government speed school classes experienced teacher turnover. Teachers' perceptions of performing tasks related to inspection purposes and concerns about their monthly salary payments were expressed frequently.

In relation to the teachers' arguments regarding their participation in the speed school program, one focal person said that.

“I have worked on the speed school program for the last four years and still do. During my time working on the program, multiple obstacles have occurred because challenges arise whenever we begin something. However, the major challenge in this program has been teacher turnover due to better salary offers and alternative work opportunities.”

Both ALFA and government adoption classes face constraints in their learning classrooms. There were insufficient classrooms and no dedicated buildings. Observations revealed that both ALFA and government adoption classes had problems with unsafe, inadequate, and non-conducive learning environments. However, government adoption speed school classes faced more challenges than ALFA classes, particularly regarding limited learning materials, lack of separate classrooms for students, and a shortage of teaching aids.

In relation to the learning classrooms, one focal person said, “A safe and conducive learning environment in the speed school classroom is not very expensive, because we can build learning classrooms by mobilizing communities, seeking help from local partners, and discussing how to address students' needs in the education system and ensure equal access. However, the only problem is the lack of initiative from individuals.”

Based on the information gathered during the interviews conducted in the study areas, both Raya Kobo and Habru woredas faced transportation challenges for supporting and monitoring woreda education experts and program staff in each school. There were no transportation inputs, such as motorbikes or cars.

In relation to this, one of the curriculum development and implementation team leaders said that.

“We had trained focal persons for the speed school program at the woreda level, trained curriculum development and implementation team experts, and trained community mobilizers at the woreda level so that we could monitor and supervise the program continuously. However, the schools are far from the woreda, and therefore, we need a transportation system, but such a system was not available.”

According to the interviewed individuals, ALFA classes experienced financial problems related to mobilizing and providing refresher training for teachers, focal persons, and other stakeholders. There were also issues with the timely allocation of funds for each activity, allowance problems, and variations in the costs of learning materials and inputs. Similarly, government adoption speed school classes faced financial problems, including difficulties in securing funds for the speed school program, similar to those faced by regular classes in purchasing and providing learning materials.

One of the speed school teachers said that.

“Currently, the displaced population has increased in our woreda, and the speed school program aims to reach such children. However, if they had the same opportunities as the earlier residents, these students would not have had to move without completing their education and dropping out. The link school students raised questions about why they did not receive the same learning and teaching aids. They compared their classrooms with those of the speed school classes and the additional supports provided to speed school students.”

Based on the interviewed participants, both the ALFA and government-adopted speed school classes had problems with allocating the available budget. In the ALFA classes, bureaucracy in financing the given budget was a significant obstacle to accomplishing each activity in the program activities on time. In the government-adopted speed school classes, there was a good start in seeking support from nongovernmental organizations, such as the Imagine 1 Day project and Save the Children through UNICEF. However, this support was not enough to expand and improve the program's activities. Therefore, government school directors and education office experts should strengthen efforts to share information about the program's effectiveness with other donors.

In relation to the bureaucratic problems in financing for the SSP, one focal person said that.

“Providing training, purchasing teaching and learning materials on time and paying allowances for trainees and trainers were serious problems. The bureaucracy in financing and the delay in allocating the budget for each activity caused these issues, so such obstacles need to be addressed.”

According to the interviewed participants, both government and ALFA speed school classes faced challenges with parents. In the government-adopted speed school classes, parents were preventing their children from attending school, using them for household work. Parents from low-income households were less willing to send their children to school, often due to a limited understanding of the importance of education. Similarly, in the ALFA classes, parents had issues with the negative connotations of the program, such as its impact on their children's religion.

In relation to the attitude of parents, one teacher from the respondents said that.

“I am an Amharic teacher, and I have been teaching for the last eight years and still continue to do so. In addition, I have been teaching the speed school program for the last three years without additional payments. This program is effective because I have taught both speed

school students and formal school students, and students enrolled in the speed school have performed better than those in formal schools. However, challenges arose at the beginning and during the implementation of the program. One problem was that parents associated the program with evil and felt it discriminated against their religion.”

4.2.1 Prospects of speed school program/accelerated education program

As per the data from the Woreda Education Office, there is a discrepancy between the expected enrollment of children in each kebele and the actual number registered and attending school. Currently, both primary and secondary school-age children are out of school in Raya Kobo and Habru. It is estimated that 22,571 boys and 18,451 girls are out of school in Raya Kobo Woreda, and 1,708 boys and 1,883 girls are out of school in Habru Woreda.

From the interview conversations, FGDs, and observed practices, both the ALFA and government-adopted speed school programs have been accepted. Participants expressed a positive view of the program's effectiveness in multiple dimensions: academic results, the relationship between teachers and parents, parental participation in economic activities and cooperative work, student commitment to teaching and learning, and addressing educational access for individuals who previously lacked opportunities or dropped out due to various obstacles.

4.2.2 Prospects of education experts to the speed school program

Both the ALFA and government-adopted speed school programs have been recognized by various individuals who understand the effectiveness of the program. Respondents said that the speed school program should be continued, expanded, and adopted in all kebele schools, especially in rural areas.

One focal person at curriculum preparations and implementation experts said that.

“To enhance the inclusion of remote areas and individuals who could not access education earlier, the speed school program is the best alternative mechanism to address the needs of these individuals.”

According to the respondents, the speed school can strengthen relationships between parents and the school community, foster collaboration between speed school and regular school teachers, raise parents' awareness of the importance of education, and foster a culture of sharing teaching experiences and learning styles. In relation to this, one respondent, the school director, stated that the speed school program benefits not only its students but also formal schools by providing experiences and activities such as teaching methodologies, learning materials, and building relationships between teachers and parents. By incorporating the experiences from this program, we should work collaboratively with all stakeholders, especially those working in the education sector. This approach can help minimize dropout rates and address challenges related to quality education and accessibility.

4.2.3 Prospects of students to the speed school program

In the FGDs, students expressed that they were happy, joyful, and effective through their participation in speed school classes. In FGD1,

they highlighted the importance of the program, noting that they benefited from learning and teaching aids and gained access to education, which had previously been denied due to the inability to pay for learning materials such as exercise books, pens, and bags. These supportive learning materials motivated them to continue their education, helping them achieve higher grades and increasing their competitiveness. Students believed that the pedagogy encouraged them to become more active learners and provided every child with the opportunity to express their knowledge and understanding. From FGD1, they also stated that their mothers benefited from participating in Self-Help Groups, gaining a greater understanding of the importance of education and now advising their children about future schooling. Before participating in the SHGs, their parents had not allowed them to attend school due to a lack of educational knowledge and instead encouraged them to focus on earning a living. Surprisingly, in FGD1, one female student who came from the speed school program and is now in grade 6 said that.

"I come from a very poor family. My parents did not voluntarily send me to school because they could not afford the cost of teaching and learning materials. In addition to this, they wanted me to earn money through various means. For example, my mother wanted me to work as a daily laborer while living with them, and my father wanted me to go to Saudi Arabia to earn money, based on experiences shared by others in our community. Fortunately, this school program was launched, and I was able to join. I have benefited from the learning materials provided. My mother also had opportunities to attend training sessions after joining the self-help group, and she now has a better understanding of the value of education. There are many children like me who are still out of school. However, if they were given the opportunity to learn, they could succeed in their education. I am now in Grade 6, and I rank first among students from both the formal school and the speed school program."

4.2.4 Prospects of teachers to the speed school program

Both ALFA and government-adopted Speed School teachers are highly encouraged because the Speed School program provides a good opportunity for children who did not have a chance to learn and could not afford learning materials.

One government-adopted class teachers stated that.

"The Speed School program not only benefited individuals who were out of school but also students who were engaged in primary school, through the sharing of experiences in teaching and learning methods. Even conventional school teachers used the teaching textbook in their own teaching and learning processes."

According to the interviewed teachers, student dropout is currently a major issue, particularly among children from the least educable families—those who are poor and often illiterate. Therefore, we need education programs like this, especially in rural and remote areas or places distant from the school environment. Students cannot pay for learning materials, and some children do not have parents. This program has helped minimize such problems in our schools. Moreover, we need collaborative efforts from government institutions and nongovernmental partners to implement the program properly.

5 Discussion of major findings

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate how the Accelerated Education Program is practiced, its effectiveness, the major challenges hindering its effectiveness, and the prospects of the program. The findings of the study are discussed in relation to the literature under each research question.

In relation to the first basic question, how is Accelerated Education Program being practiced?

To answer this question, the activities of each Accelerated Education/Speed School program were examined, including the school calendar and schedule, the curriculum condensation system of Speed School/Accelerated Education Program, the launch of the Speed School class/Accelerated Education Program, the recruitment and selection criteria for teachers and schools, the enrollment criteria for students, the implementation site of the Speed School class, types of learning materials, the classroom setup and environment, and the teaching and assessment methodology.

The Speed School class follows the official primary school calendar, usually starting in mid-September and ending in late June. A learning day lasts 7 h, beginning at eight o'clock in the morning and ending at five o'clock in the afternoon (Geneva Global, 2020). This research also found that the calendars of both ALFA and government-adopted classes are implemented over 10 months, from September to June, divided into three phases: Phase One, Phase Two, and Phase Three. In each phase, content is delivered over 2 months for Grade One, 4 months for Grade Two, and 4 months for Grade Three. The findings indicate that the schedule for the government-adopted Speed School class begins at 2:00 p.m. and ends at 6:00 p.m., which contradicts the Speed School guidelines stating that a classic Speed School learning day lasts 7 h, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a 1-h lunch break. AEPs that offer timetable flexibility should provide learning at times that best suit learners, which may vary by day, month, or season depending on local needs (Menéndez, 2016).

To meet learners' needs, AEP curricula, materials, and pedagogy often differ from those of formal schools. AEP curricula are typically condensed, removing non-core subjects and repetition while focusing on literacy and mathematics (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). The delivery of a condensed curriculum begins with an expanded version of what students need to learn in their local context to succeed in future schooling and as lifelong learners and engaged citizens (Geneva Global, 2020). This research shows that to condense the Speed School curriculum, preparatory activities were undertaken before program implementation, including validation workshops with stakeholders at the woreda, zonal, and regional levels. Ideally, AEPs in emergency and developing contexts facilitate student learning by condensing curricula—a responsibility of the Ministry of Education—while using accelerated learning pedagogy. However, in reality, it is often implemented by agencies in close consultation with education authorities (Myers and Pinnock, 2017).

The start of the Speed School year is preceded by a flurry of activity. The main actions required to launch the Speed School class fall into three main categories: preparing the classroom, preparing facilitators and teachers, and enrolling students (Geneva Global, 2020). Similarly, this research found that before implementing the teaching and learning process, various activities were carried out, such as training for teachers, woreda, zonal, and regional curriculum implementation teams, focal persons, school directors, and supervisors; accessing learning materials; and recruiting teachers.

Many facilitators/teachers have only a Grade 10 or 12 certificate and are selected from the local community, ensuring they know the local language and context, as well as many of the parents (Geneva Global, 2020). Conversely, findings from this research indicated that teachers should be diploma holders and must agree to the same salary scale as other diploma-level teachers. After training, they are expected to begin teaching immediately. Both the Speed School guidelines and practices in the study areas indicate that recruited teachers should be able to communicate in the local language. AEPs may recruit various types of teachers: local, untrained educators and individuals with experience in other fields (Myers and Pinnock, 2017).

The enrollment and selection of students begins with the local education authority identifying communities within its jurisdiction that have high numbers of out-of-school children of primary school age (Geneva Global, 2020). AEPs address the needs of learners who are overage for the formal school system and have been denied education or had it disrupted due to crisis, conflict, or other disadvantages. This includes marginalized or excluded learners and girls who have traditionally been denied an education (Menéndez, 2016). Similarly, this research found that students enrolled in the Speed School program were between the ages of 9 and 14. Many came from very poor families, had single parents or no parents, lived with health conditions (e.g., HIV/AIDS), lacked prior access to education, dropped out for various reasons, or were displaced from different regions.

The first step in preparing the Speed School classroom is finding a suitable space to gather pupils and conduct instruction. The next step is to ensure the physical structure of the classroom is solid, safe, and conducive to learning (Geneva Global, 2020). Research findings showed that ALFA classrooms were visually and structurally distinct from conventional classrooms and more conducive to learning. In contrast, government-adopted classes were less attractive and convenient, lacked gender-separated classrooms and latrines, and faced shortages of learning inputs due to financial limitations. Being “learning-ready” means that the AEP reduces or eliminates attendance costs, ensures the provision and maintenance of facilities, is effectively managed, and maintains an appropriate pupil-to-teacher ratio (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). The first choice for Speed School classrooms is typically a room in a link school. When unavailable, the community may use other local institutions (Geneva Global, 2020). Maintaining AEP centers as safe, inclusive learning spaces requires training and mentoring of community education committees (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). This study found that both ALFA and government-adopted classes were delivered at government or link schools due to their programmatic effectiveness and convenience for monitoring and supervision. Building the capacity of local education authorities to supervise and monitor AEPs may enhance sustainability and increase effectiveness (Myers and Pinnock, 2017).

The Speed School program encourages facilitators to use locally available resources such as counting sticks, bottle caps, abacuses, graphic materials (e.g., pictures, posters, flashcards), and tactile learning tools (Geneva Global, 2020). Research shows that ALFA classes used a variety of materials such as colored paper, markers, pens, scissors, posters, chalk, rulers, maps, Wuhu, A4 paper, cartons, teacher guides, and condensed textbooks. Meanwhile, government-adopted classes primarily used locally available materials such as crops, wood, and cartons, with limited access to pens, scissors, posters, and other learning aids. Teachers and students believed that using and manipulating these locally available materials helped students develop skills and visualize their learning. AEPs should collect evidence on

how they support holistic learning outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy, focusing on social-emotional development and life skills (Shah and Choo, 2020).

The success of the Speed School program is closely linked to facilitators' effective use of learner-centered and activity-based methods, including games, group work, experiments, poster presentations, brainstorming, case studies, role plays, simulations, competitions, and projects (Geneva Global, 2020). AEP implementation should incorporate interactive methodologies, including group work, discovery learning, child-centered programming, and hands-on activities (Menéndez, 2016). Findings from this study revealed that both ALFA and government-adopted classes used activity-based learning, peer teaching, student-centered participation, hands-on activities like cutting and drawing, group discussions, and brainstorming sessions. Moreover, teachers believed that if all necessary learning and teaching materials were available, it would be easy to implement activity-based, participatory, and interactive learning, as well as constructive classroom management. Using various teaching methods, Speed School facilitators can transform abstract curriculum content into relevant, practical knowledge and life skills, making learning easier and more engaging (Geneva Global, 2020). Teachers also believed that collaboration with formal schools is essential to foster a learner-centered methodology and motivate students. Regular in-service professional development, peer collaboration among teachers, and strong mentoring systems are crucial for success.

Implementing partners of AEPs should work collectively to shape national education policy, ensuring that gaps and implementation issues are addressed in coordination with national education stakeholders and donors (Shah and Choo, 2020). Conversely, findings from this study showed that students have recently benefited from alternative, non-formal education programs supported by external bodies. However, to ensure sustainability, all stakeholders in the education sector must be actively involved, rather than relying solely on external partners. Woreda education experts and teachers believe sustained commitment is needed to significantly improve the program and reaching a large number of out-of-school children in local areas.

In relation to the second basic question about the effectiveness of SSP on parents' participation in income-generating activities.

The findings of this study showed the outcomes of the program in terms of how many parents were organized into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and participated in income-generating activities. The results are discussed below.

A key rationale for providing AEP services is access. Every program reviewed identified access to education as a precondition for implementation and targeted out-of-school youth, school dropouts, or children who had never attended a formal school (Menendez et al., 2020). Similarly, the Speed School program is a comprehensive strategy aimed at helping out-of-school, primary-aged children return to school and succeed (Geneva Global, 2020). The Speed School program enables every primary-aged child who has been excluded from formal education to acquire core literacy, numeracy, and general learning skills, allowing them to join their age peers in a conventional primary school classroom (Geneva Global, 2020).

The Self-Help Group (SHG) program aims to enable mothers to earn enough income to cover the direct costs of schooling, allowing their Speed School child to complete primary education (Grade 8) and transition successfully into government link schools (Akyeampong et al., 2017). The research findings also showed that in the 2013 school

year, out of the planned 375 mothers, 315 (84%) participated in SHGs. These parents engaged in sheep and goat fattening, as well as poultry production, supported by credit financing from the project. Teachers believed that SHGs not only increased parental income but also helped build a culture of collaboration and mutual support.

In relation to the third basic question about challenges for the effective implementation/practice of the Accelerated Education Program.

The findings of this study indicated that the major challenges encountered in implementing the Accelerated Education Program (AEP)/Speed School Program involved stakeholder involvement, lack of learning and teaching materials and classrooms, poor financing systems, infrastructure problems (particularly transportation), teacher-related issues, parental attitudes, and student-related challenges. Each of these challenges is discussed separately below.

One problem is that the responsible structures and staff are still relatively new to the Speed School model, and leadership—both administrators and technicians—frequently changes. As a result, Speed School remains largely unfamiliar to many, even though being well entrenched at the local level (Geneva Global, 2021). The research findings also revealed that, from the beginning of the program until now, the responsible structures and staff have remained relatively new to the model. Although they are aware of the program's benefits, they are still in the process of familiarizing themselves with it and rely heavily on Geneva Global implementers.

Long bureaucratic delays and funding gaps have been cited as reasons for the closure of AEP centers, while a lack of funding has significantly limited essential activities such as teacher professional development, capacity building, and the recruitment of new teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

Successful AEPs that reintegrated students into formal education developed enabling and sustainable financing mechanisms through local communities (Fitzpatrick, 2020). The research findings indicated financial challenges in mobilizing and providing refresher training for teachers, focal persons, and other stakeholders. Problems included delays in financial disbursements for each activity and the unavailability of allowances and incentives.

Poor center management—including the absence of gender-separated latrines (which particularly affects adolescent girls), lack of school breakfast or energy-boosting snacks, and teacher absenteeism—can contribute to low attendance and dropout rates (Myers and Pinnock, 2017). School fees—whether formal tuition or informal costs such as learning materials or school uniforms—continue to be a barrier to effective transitions into formal education (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

The findings of this research indicated that both ALFA and government-adopted classes faced constraints regarding classroom availability, with insufficient classrooms and buildings. However, ALFA classes had better access to classrooms and learning materials compared to government-adopted classes, which struggled with limited materials and lacked dedicated classrooms for Speed School students. Moreover, the investigator's observations noted that ALFA classrooms were relatively sound, safe, and more conducive to learning than government-adopted classrooms. Accelerated Education (AE) learners continue to face challenges transitioning into formal education systems due to a variety of supply- and demand-side barriers (Shah and Choo, 2020).

Community and parental perceptions of the value of education for girls, household chores that prevent girls from attending school, early

marriage, the lack of female teachers, poor gender sensitivity, and pedagogical practices that do not support female learners all negatively affect the successful delivery of AEPs (Fitzpatrick, 2020). The findings of this research showed that some parents associated the program with evil or against their religious beliefs. They questioned why their children were taught separately, leading to frustration. Gender-related barriers often intersect with broader political, educational, and socio-economic challenges—such as household poverty, pastoralism, and insecurity—that disproportionately affect female learners in many contexts where AEPs operate (Shah and Choo, 2020).

Teachers in AEPs are often paid daily and lack secure contracts. Delays in incentive payments have resulted in high teacher turnover, as many leave for NGOs offering better pay (Fitzpatrick, 2020). The findings also revealed that high teacher turnover was a significant issue, with many teachers seeking better salaries and alternative employment opportunities.

In relation to the fourth basic question, the prospect of the accelerated education/speed school program to measure the effectiveness of the program and sustainable benefits for out-of-school children.

The findings of this study showed the potential of the Accelerated Education Program (AEP)/Speed School Program as perceived by education experts from woreda education curriculum teams, focal persons of the SSP, school directors, supervisors, SSP teachers, and former SSP students, in addressing the large number of out-of-school children and youth. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 262 million children and youth are out of school globally (Shah et al., 2017). As a result, AE programs are being employed with increasing frequency to address the overwhelming numbers of out-of-school children and youth (Shah et al., 2017).

6 Conclusion

The study revealed that the Accelerated Education Program (AEP), specifically the Speed School Program (SSP), has been implemented with mixed effectiveness across the North Wollo Zone. While the program adhered to the designated 10-month implementation period in terms of alignment with the school calendar and curriculum, core SSP activities, such as proper facilitation and planning, were not fully addressed. This lack of adherence reduced limited the program's ability to effectively measure actual outcomes and limited the opportunity to draw meaningful lessons for future development. The curriculum was condensed and adapted to the AEP framework; however, variations in implementation and insufficient preparation compromised its overall quality. Regarding teacher recruitment and facilitation, ALFA classes largely relied on full-time facilitators, while government-adopted classes utilized part-time teachers from neighboring link schools. Limited support and lack of consistent motivation for facilitators, especially in government-adopted classes, led to a high turnover rate, disrupting learning continuity and planning efforts at various levels.

The program showed notable success in enhancing parental participation through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), with 84% of targeted mothers engaging in income-generating activities. These SHGs not only improved household income but also promoted collaboration among parents, indicating positive outcome in terms of community mobilization and ownership of the program. However, the study identified significant challenges that hindered the effectiveness of the

AEP, including insufficient collaboration with government stakeholders, limited financial support, a shortage of learning materials, inadequate classroom facilities, and logistical constraints such as transportation. Furthermore, there was a tendency to rely heavily on local NGOs while underutilizing government schools and systems for sustained implementation. Despite these challenges, the Speed School Program is viewed positively by various stakeholders, indicating a strong foundation for future improvements. To enhance its prospects, the study recommends stronger stakeholder coordination, better support for teachers, and a more balanced partnership between NGOs and government entities. Addressing these gaps is essential for strengthening the program's implementation and long-term impact.

6.1 Recommendations

- o As outlined in the Speed School guideline, a key component is strengthening primary school capacity through workshops, training sessions, and interactions with Speed School facilitators and Education Communities of Practice. However, the findings indicate that, apart from interactions between Speed School teachers and regular teachers, the remaining capacity-building activities were not adequately implemented. Therefore, to ensure the continued success of the Speed School program, the Amhara Education Bureau, Woreda Education Offices, and other relevant stakeholders should actively engage in systematic monitoring and supervision efforts.
- o The study revealed that students in the ALFA class demonstrated better progression and lower dropout rates compared to those in the government adoption class. In light of this, greater attention should be given to the government adoption classes, particularly by school staff and kebele leaders. These actors should receive clear guidance on the core activities that need to be implemented. Moreover, stakeholders should be encouraged to introduce innovative practices and draw on successful experiences from other contexts to improve student outcomes.
- o The study further showed that former Speed School students had superior academic performance in regular classes. Accordingly, all stakeholders involved in implementing the Speed School program are encouraged to share best practices and engage in discussions to reflect on the results. This will support evidence-based decision-making—whether to recognize and scale up current achievements or apply lessons learned to improve future implementation of the program.
- o According to the Speed School guidelines, the official daily schedule is 8 h, typically from 2:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. However, the study found discrepancies across the study areas: while ALFA classes followed the standard schedule, government adoption classes operated only from 2:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. In response to this inconsistency, the Amhara Education Bureau, Woreda Education Offices, and other stakeholders are urged to critically assess the actual implementation of both schedules. A thorough examination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) associated with scheduling practices should be conducted to establish and enforce a unified and effective standard.
- o The findings indicate that participants in the Speed School program generally held a positive outlook regarding its impact and future

prospects. Therefore, experts from the Amhara Regional Bureau, North Wollo Zone Education Office, Woreda Education Offices, and other partner organizations involved in program implementation should work collaboratively. Furthermore, evaluation results should be shared through formal reports and stakeholder meetings to facilitate informed discussions about the program's effectiveness and guide future planning.

- o A comprehensive, sector-wide effort is necessary to identify children who have dropped out of school or are at risk of doing so. Strategic and targeted interventions should be developed to ensure that these children are supported and encouraged to continue their education without disruption.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this study can be found in online repositories. The names of the repository/repository and accession number(s) can be found in the article/supplementary material.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by College of Educational and Behavioral Science Ethics Committee, Woldia University. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

YS: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SW: Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization.

Funding

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated

References

- Accelerated Education Working Group (2020). *Catch-up programs: 10 principles to help learners catch up and return to learning*. Geneva, Switzerland: Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), hosted by UNHCR.
- Akyeampong, K., Delprato, M., Sabates, R., James, Z., Pryor, J., Westbrook, J., et al. (2018). *Speed School Programme in Ethiopia: Tracking the Progress of speed school students: 2011–17. Research report*. Brighton, UK: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, Falmer.
- Akyeampong, K., Getachew, S., Humphreys, S., and Mengiste, A. (2017). *Research in to self-help groups and speed school graduates' experiences of schooling*. UK: Center for international education. University of Sussex.
- Akyeampong, K., Rolleston, C., Ampiah, J. G., and Lewin, K. M. (2020). Speed School: A model for accelerated learning in Africa. REAL Centre, University of Cambridge.
- Akyeampong, W., Pryor, J., Westbrook, J., Abreham, R., Adane, T., and Woldie, S. (2016). *Research in to the speed school curriculum and pedagogy in Ethiopia*. UK: Center for international education, University of Sussex.
- Birks, M., and Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as qualitative research method. Available online at: <https://www.net/publication/240807798> (Accessed June 30, 2022).
- Creswell, J. W. (2007a). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Second Edn. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007b). *An introduction to mixed methods research*. US: SSP, University Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. 3rd Edn. California: SAGE Publications, Inc. thousand Oaks.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, California, USA: SAGE, University of labersaka, Lincoln.
- Denzin, N. K. (2019). "Grounded theory and the politics of interpretation, redux" in *The SAGE handbook of current developments in grounded theory*. eds. A. Bryant and K. Charmaz (Thousand Oaks, California, USA: Sage Publications), 449–469.
- Eeuwijk, P., and van Angehrn, Z. (2017). How to conduct a focus group discussion (FGD). Basel: Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute.
- Fitzpatrick, R. (2020). Accelerated education: A response to children's unmet learning needs. *Education in Crisis Network*.
- Geneva Global (2021). Speed School Program, Ethiopia and Uganda. Annual report 202. Geneva Global-Eth (2020). Speed School Toolkit.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Constructivist grounded theory? Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 3, Art.12.
- Glaser, B. G. (2008). *Doing quantitative grounded theory*. Mill Valley, California, USA: The Sociology Press.
- Global Geneva. (2020). *Speed School program overview*. Geneva Global.
- Holton, J. A., and Walsh, I. (2017). *Classic grounded theory: Applications with qualitative and quantitative data*. Los Angeles, California, USA: Sage Publications.
- Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2020). Policy notes: creating enabling non- formal education environment for adolescents and youth. Available online at: <https://inee.org/resources/creating-enabling-non-formal-education-environment-adolescents-and-youth> (Accessed May 18, 2022).
- Lowden, J. (2019). *Geneva Global's speed school program*. Pennsylvania, USA: Center for international education.
- Mathers, C., Mitchell, D., and Heneghan, A. M. (1998). *Evaluating teaching and learning: A practical handbook for colleges, universities and the scholarship of teaching*. Routledge.
- Menendez, A., Riegle-Crumb, C., and Brown, R. (2020). Educational inequality and accelerated learning programs. *Comparative Education Review*, 64, 557–581.
- Menéndez, A. S. (2016). *Accelerated education programs in crisis and conflict: Building evidence and learning*. Chicago, Illinois, USA: United States Agency for International Development, the University of Chicago.
- Mengistie, R., Zenawi, Z., Chalachew, W., Seid, E., and Abate, K. (2017). *A comparative analysis of the academic achievement of students in speed school classrooms and conventional school classrooms in selected primary schools in the regional state of Tigray*. Mekelle, Ethiopia: Mekelle University.
- Ministry of Education (2005). *Education sector development program III (ESDP-III)*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Program Action Plan.
- Ministry of Education (2010). *National Report on the development and state of the art of adult learning and education (ALE)*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Ministry of Education.
- MoE and UNICEF (2012). *Study on situation of out of school children (OOSC) in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Global Out of School Children Initiative.
- Moumne, R., Murphy, E., Bianchi, S., Bouetard, M., Dorsi, D., Griffiths, V., et al. (2019). *Right to education handbook*. Paris, France: UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative.
- Myers, J., and Pinnock, H. (2016). *Accelerated education Programmes: A toolkit for donors, practitioners and evaluators*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR.
- Myers, J., and Pinnock, H. (2017). *A guide for accelerated education Programme designers, implementers, evaluators and agencies*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR.
- Ngware, M. W., Abuya, B. A., Admassu, K., Mutisya, M., Musyoka, P. K., and Oketch, M. (2018). Quality and access to education in urban informal settlements in Kenya. *Urban Education* 53, 98–120.
- Oddy, J. (2019). *Accelerated education programming (AEP): Children, families, teachers and educational stakeholders' experiences of AEP in Uganda*. London, UK: Save the children.
- Okesina, M. (2020). A critical review of the relationship between paradigm, methodology, design and method in research. *J. Res. Method Educ.* 6, 1–10. doi: 10.53400/mimbar-sd.v6i1.15224
- Onwu, G. O., and Agu, A. (2010). Professional development for quality teaching and learning: The Ghanaian experience. *International Review of Education*, 56, 55–71.
- Pandey, P. (2015). *Research methodology: Tools and techniques*. Romania, European union: Bridge center.
- Randall, J., Odonnell, F., and Botha, S. M. (2020). *Accelerated learning programs for out of school girls: The impact on students' achievement*. Furcolo Hall, Amherst, MA 01003, USA: Forum for International Research in Education, University of Massachusetts.
- Rauchwerk, S. (2017). Learning through play in speed school, an international accelerated learning program. *Int. J. Learn. Teach. Educ. Res.*
- Shah, R. (2015). *A meta-evaluation of the Norwegian refugee Council's accelerated education Responses*. Auckland: Norwegian Refugee Council, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.
- Shah, R., and Choo, W. (2020). *Accelerated education evidence review strengthening the evidence base or accelerated education*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: UNHCR, university of Auckland.
- Shah, R., Flemming, J., and Boisvert, K. (2017). *Synthesis report accelerated education working group: Accelerated education principles field studies*. Geneva, Switzerland: Accelerated Education Working.
- Shiferaw, G. Y. (2023). *Assessing the practice and challenges of accelerated education program in North Wollo*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Bahir Dar University.
- The Luminos Fund (2017). *Speed school*. Ethiopia: Facilitators Training Guide.
- Timmermans, S., and Tavory, I. (2007). "Advancing ethnographic research through grounded theory practice" in *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. eds. A. Bryant and K. Charmaz (Cham, Switzerland: Sage Publications), 493–512.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019). Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth: Global status and trends. Available online at: <http://uis.unesco.org/UNESCOstat> (Accessed May 15, 2022).
- UNESCO institute for statistics & UNICEF (2015). *Fixing the broken promise of education for all: Findings from the global initiatives on out of school children*. Montreal, Canada: UNESCO Institute for statistics.
- UNICEF and UIS (2016). "Monitoring education participation: framework for monitoring children and adolescents who are out of school or at risk of dropping out" in *UNICEF series on education participation and dropout prevention*, vol. 1 (Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States).
- UNICEF & UNESCO (2007). *A human rights-based approach to education for all: A framework for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education*. New York, USA & UNESCO, Paris, France: UNICEF.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2022). *A strategic framework on alternative education for out-of-school adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York, NY, USA: The education section of the UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean regional office, Panama, Republic of Panama.
- Waltham, M., Hattori, H., Motivans, A., Huebler, F., and Bell, S. (2015). *Global out-of-school children initiative operational manual*. New York: UNICEF Education Section Programme.