

LIFTED: Applying an equity-centred evidence synthesis

An accompanying technical report for a synthesis on transitions from accelerated education programmes to formal schools

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September 2025

Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by Education.org's Dr. Sophia D'Angelo (Director of Research) and Deirdre Beecher (Information Specialist). The full evidence synthesis was conducted by a wider research team including Eileen O'Malley (Director of Development) and Dr. Randa Grob-Zakhary (Chief Executive Officer). Invaluable support in the design and development of the final synthesis and accompanying products was provided by Education.org's communications team led by Georgina Mallory (Chief Communications Officer) and Ana Tabacaru (Communications and Engagement Officer). Input and feedback were also provided by Giulia Di Filippantonio (Director of Programmes), Dr. Kilemi Mwiria (Representative), and Thaianne Pereira (Operations / Project Manager). Support with initial scoping of the research topic and the design of the coding framework, and/or analysis of data was provided by Dr. Jean-Marc Bernard, Dr. Sue Grant Lewis, Erin Sorenson, Kenechukwu Nwagbo, and Nadré Tra Lou.

We are grateful to all our partners, including government stakeholders, donors, and AEP implementers and practitioners, who acted as critical friends and informed the initial scoping and development of the research questions and analytical framework, provided evidence, reviewed emerging or final insights, or co-developed case studies that grounded the synthesis in real-world practice. Special thanks to the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) for their steadfast support and thought leadership. We also extend our sincere gratitude to the peer reviewers of this technical report: Dr. Sue Grant Lewis and Dr. Charles Gachoki (Zizi Afrique).

Lastly, we acknowledge with deep appreciation the contributions of the International Working Group (IWG), a collaboration of more than 25 organisations convened by Education.org in 2023. LIFTED builds directly on the guidance co-created with this group of experts, whose collective efforts shaped the methods for classifying, identifying, and appraising diverse forms of evidence. Their collaborative and pioneering work laid the foundation on which our synthesis approach was developed and tested.

Please cite as:

D'Angelo, S., & Beecher, D. (2025). *LIFTED: Applying an equity-centred evidence synthesis - An accompanying technical report for a synthesis on transitions from accelerated education programmes to formal schools*. Education.org.

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Acronyms

AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AERD	African Education Research Database
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
AJOL	African Journals Online
CSEA	Centre for Study of the Economies of Africa
dLOC	Digital Library of the Caribbean
ESSA	Education Sub Saharan Africa
GPE-KIX	Global Partnership for Education-Knowledge Innovation Exchange
INEE	Inter-agency Network for education in Emergencies
IWG	International Working Group
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSTOR	Journal Storage (digital library)
LAB	Latin American Bureau
LAC	Latin American Countries
LMIC	Lower and middle-income countries
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OA	Open Access
OOSCY	Out-Of-School Children and Youth
PICO	Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcomes
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STEP	Supporting Transitions through Evidence-based Planning
WOS	Web of Science

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Glossary

Defining and conceptualising evidence...

- **Evidence:** As defined in [Education.org's White Paper \(2021\)](#), evidence is “the most relevant and highest-quality available information to inform education decisions.” This includes research and non-research, peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed, published and unpublished—provided it is assessed for both rigor and equity.

When talking about different types of evidence...

- **Research evidence:** Evidence generated through systematic data collection and analysis, often referred to as ‘empirical’ research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods); also includes desk-based research, which uses systematic approaches for reviewing existing evidence and producing original findings (without collecting new data).
- **Non-research evidence:** Evidence generated through firsthand experiences or practice-based (tacit) knowledge, expert consensus and stakeholder consultations (e.g., through meetings or discussions); may also include sources of evidence that repackage original evidence produced in research (e.g., derivatives and new outputs of original research). Examples include: policy or programmatic documents with administrative statistics or monitoring and evaluation data, blogs drawing on the perspectives of teachers and other practitioners; reports summarising conference hearings or stakeholder meetings. Non-research evidence, though less frequently used in systematic evidence reviews, is being increasingly valued in the health sector, to illuminate not only *what works* but also *how, why, and for whom* ([Pearson et al., 2024](#); [Glasofer & Townsend, 2021](#)).

When talking about different types of research...

- **Desk-based research:** Research conducted primarily through document or evidence reviews or secondary data analysis without new field data collection.
- **Quantitative research:** Research based on numerical data, often using statistical analysis to measure relationships, outcomes, or impacts (e.g., surveys, experiments, quasi-experiments).
- **Qualitative research:** Research based on non-numerical data to explore meanings, experiences, and perspectives (e.g., interviews, focus groups, ethnography).
- **Mixed-methods research:** Research that systematically integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study.

When talking about how evidence is published...

- **Published evidence** are sources that are made *publicly available*, usually online, but also offline (e.g., stored in libraries, universities, and research institutes, ministries, etc.). Published sources of evidence can be peer-reviewed or non-peer-reviewed.
- **Unpublished evidence** are sources that are not made publicly available (online or offline) and can only be accessed through direct outreach or communication/contact.
- **Peer reviewed evidence** are sources of evidence that have undergone formal peer review, usually published in academic journals, dissertations, or books. Peer-reviewed evidence is valued for methodological rigor but often under-represents lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and researchers or knowledge producers from these contexts (e.g., [Brun et al., 2024](#)).

- **Non-peer-reviewed evidence** are sources of evidence that have *not* undergone formal peer review. These may include programme evaluations and reports, policy documents, blogs, briefs, conference hearings, or news articles and investigative journalism. Non-peer-reviewed evidence is often referred to as 'grey literature' and it has become increasingly recognised as important for evidence syntheses, as it can reduce publication bias, increase the comprehensiveness and timeliness of findings, and foster a more balanced picture of available evidence (e.g., [Paez, 2017](#)). Importantly, non-peer reviewed evidence includes both *research* (quant, qual, mixed methods, desk-based) and *non-research* (blogs, literature reviews, research briefs, policy documents, etc.).

When identifying, reviewing, managing, or referring to evidence...

- **Source:** A source of evidence is an item containing evidence, whether a document (e.g., report, brief, journal article, book chapter, conference hearing, presentation, policy paper, etc.), a video or audio recording (e.g., of a webinar, event, or consultation), or in another format. Each source is saved as a record in Education.org's Zotero library.
- **Sourcing:** Sourcing (or 'to source' for evidence) refers to the broad process of identifying and obtaining relevant evidence from a wide range of channels, including not only systematic searches online, but also reference list checks, hand-searching websites, journals, or reports, consulting experts, or contacting key stakeholders to crowdsource. It captures the full set of activities used to assemble evidence, beyond structured searches online. As such, sourcing can help reduce publication and visibility biases by systematically drawing in work that would not appear through database searches.
- **Searching:** Searching (or 'to search' for evidence) refers to the systematic use of bibliographic databases, journals, search engines, and other structured tools with predefined search strings, filters, and subject headings. Though narrower than 'sourcing,' it aims to comprehensively locate eligible studies according to a protocol. While search strategies are generally designed to be replicable, they often require iteration and adaptation, especially when looking for non-peer-reviewed evidence (e.g., [Lefebvre et al., 2024](#)).
- **Screening:** Screening (or 'to screen' evidence) refers to assessing the eligibility of a source of evidence to be included in an evidence synthesis. The process of screening assessing the source against key inclusion or exclusion criteria. If the source meets all inclusion criteria, it is 'included' in the evidence synthesis; if it does not, it is excluded.
- **Appraising:** Appraising (or 'to appraise' evidence) involves evaluating or determining the *quality* of the evidence, using fixed criteria that are embedded into an Appraisal Tool. In this research, we use a two-phased appraisal approach, with an Initial Appraisal Tool and a Final Appraisal tool, both of which are designed to capture methodological rigor as well as transparency, relevance, and inclusion of marginalised voices.
- **Selecting for deeper analysis:** When a source is selected for deeper analysis, it has successfully passed through the screening process (i.e. it was included in the evidence synthesis because it met the inclusion criteria), and the Initial Appraisal Tool (i.e. it met certain quality-control criteria, and was found to be amongst the most relevant and highest quality evidence sources). All sources that are selected for deeper analysis undergo a more comprehensive coding/analysis process.
- **Author:** The author of a source of evidence refers to the organisation or individual given credit for producing it. Oftentimes this includes individual names for those who wrote a document; other times, authorship may be based on the logo(s) or name(s) of institution(s) included on the source.

Summary

This technical report is an accompanying document to our main evidence synthesis report, [*Transitions to formal education: Evidence-based strategies to ensure all learners thrive in school*](#). It does not present policy recommendations itself but instead provides a transparent account of the methods applied and the results of using our LIFTED approach in practice.

The Locally Inclusive Framework to Transform Education Decision-Making (LIFTED) is Education.org’s distinctive approach to evidence synthesis and use. It preserves the rigor of systematic methods while deliberately strengthening equity—capturing peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed evidence (or ‘grey literature’), local research, and policy or practitioner insights often missed in evidence reviews. Unlike approaches that lock in a protocol at the outset, LIFTED begins with a prospective issue tree developed with policymakers and other education leaders, and adapts the searching and sourcing strategies in real time as gaps emerge. In doing so, LIFTED draws on critical interpretive and framework-based syntheses approaches.

For this synthesis on transitions from accelerated education programs (AEPs) to formal schooling, we screened over 11,000 sources, included 387, and fully coded 151. Sourcing relevant evidence combined systematic desk-based searches through academic databases and a bespoke list of organisational websites, as well as crowdsourcing through networks to locate evidence not easily accessible online. Evidence was appraised using a multi-stage process that assessed rigor, purpose, context, relevance, and representation of marginalised voices. This adaptive approach ensured both transparency and responsiveness to real-world education system needs, enhancing equity through the research process and outputs.

Applying LIFTED transformed the evidence base, leading to significantly more robust coverage and insights. The number of contributing organisations tripled, authors from low-income countries increased, and coverage of marginalised learners’ experiences expanded substantially. Evidence was drawn from 68 countries—40 of which would have been excluded by peer-review alone. At the same time, persistent blind spots remain, with evidence still being dominated by authors from high-income countries, and limited evidence found in Arabic or emerging from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Thematic and methodological gaps were also revealed: evidence is concentrated at the start and end of a learner’s transition journey, with limited insights on mid-stages such as formal school placement and enrolment, and longitudinal or disaggregated data beyond gender is rare.

LIFTED shows that equity and rigor can coexist. By replacing a static protocol with a living framework, it produced a more representative, context-sensitive, and actionable evidence base. This strengthens both research credibility and policy relevance, moving closer to closing the “last mile” between evidence and decision-making.

1. Introduction

Background and Purpose

As governments and education partners work toward the Sustainable Development Goals, the urgency to reach out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) is growing. Today, an estimated 271 million children and youth are not in school, more than ever before ([UNESCO, 2025](#)). Recent cuts to foreign aid risk excluding an additional 6 million by the end of 2026 ([UNICEF, 2025](#)). While overlapping crises, including conflict, environmental disasters, health emergencies, or insecurity put pressure on education systems already constrained by limited resources and capacity, poverty, gender, disability, displacement and other vulnerabilities intersect to compound challenges for the most marginalised young people ([UNESCO, 2020](#)). Accelerated education programmes have emerged as a key strategy to support OOSCY in catching up on their learning and integrating into the formal school system. Yet gaps persist on how best to support learners so that they not only transition to school successfully but also learn and thrive long-term.

This is not due to a lack of evidence, but rather the inability to use what we know effectively. Despite abundant research on ‘what works’ in education, policymakers and practitioners struggle to access and use it, limiting progress in improving children’s learning—especially for the most vulnerable. [Education.org’s \(2021\) White Paper](#) calls for collective efforts to close this knowing-doing gap by producing research that responds to real-world needs, strengthening approaches to evidence syntheses, creating clear and actionable guidance, and promoting a stronger culture of evidence use across the education sector. Decision-makers need access to a broader range of sources, including program evaluations, policy documents, practice-based insights, as well as voices and firsthand experiences of learners, families, and communities—particularly those who are often excluded. By drawing on a wider range of sources, beyond peer-reviewed or scholarly work, evidence synthesisers can uncover more evidence on the experiences of marginalised groups or the work of local researchers and implementing organisations ([Education.org, 2025](#))

It is through this lens that this current evidence synthesis was designed. Building on Education.org’s *Accelerated Education Programmes: An Evidence Synthesis for Policy Leaders* ([Grant Lewis et al., 2022](#)), this synthesis explores the next step: transitioning learners from accelerated education programmes (AEPs) to formal schools. The topic of transitions to formal primary and secondary school was selected based on consultations with policymakers, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, who indicated a need for more evidence-based strategies. By drawing on both peer-reviewed literature and other evidence sources, this synthesis provides education leaders with contextually relevant and actionable insights to guide planning and policymaking. Grounded in the belief that credible, relevant evidence must be inclusive — not just in terms of what is studied, but whose perspectives are represented — the technical approach to the

synthesis, described below, has been shaped by the International Working Group ([IWG, 2025](#)). Launched in 2023 by Education.org, the IWG brought together more than 25 organisations that came together with the common goal of making educational evidence more inclusive. In 2024 it developed guidance on how to classify, access, and appraise a wider set of evidence, introducing contextual criteria, and providing tools for using non-research and non-peer reviewed evidence. The aim: ensuring decision-makers have access to diverse, credible, and locally relevant evidence. The contributions of the IWG formed the foundation on which our synthesis approach was developed and tested. As such, it contributes to developing more equitable, responsive systems better equipped to meet the needs of the most marginalised learners.

Introducing LIFTED: An equity-centred approach to evidence synthesis

The Locally Inclusive Framework to Transform Education Decision-Making (LIFTED) is Education.org's distinctive, user-centred approach to evidence synthesis. It combines the rigor of systematic evidence review methods with an equity-first orientation, deliberately engaging the end-user (policymakers in LMICs and crisis-affected contexts), and capturing the most relevant and highest quality evidence, including peer-reviewed studies alongside non-peer-reviewed evidence such as evaluation reports, policy and programme documents, and research briefs. By doing so, LIFTED captures more insights from local researchers, implementers, and policymakers, and more evidence focused on marginalised learners, including girls, refugees, youth, and learners with disabilities ([Education.org, 2025](#)).

Unlike some systematic evidence reviews that fix a protocol in advance, LIFTED uses an iterative and participatory approach to evidence synthesis. The process begins with a prospective issue tree co-developed with policymakers and adapts the searching and sourcing strategies in real time as gaps emerge. While this technical report applies LIFTED to our synthesis on transitions from accelerated education programs (AEPs) to formal schooling, it also documents how the approach is still being refined. We draw lessons from this application and compare LIFTED to other synthesis methods—such as framework-based syntheses, which are well-suited to urgent policy questions ([Dixon-Woods, 2011](#)), and critical interpretive syntheses, which appraise quality in terms of contextual relevance ([Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)).

This technical report serves as a companion to the main synthesis. It does not present policy recommendations but instead offers a transparent account of the methods applied and the results of using LIFTED in practice. Its two goals are: (1) to explain the LIFTED approach in full, and (2) to illustrate what its application reveals about the evidence base on AEP transitions. Together, these aims provide transparency on our process and insights into the strengths and challenges of using LIFTED. Section 2 details the LIFTED approach, Section 3 presents the results of applying it, Section 4 reflects on lessons learned with implications and recommendations for future iterations of LIFTED, and Section 5 concludes with a brief conclusion, positioning LIFTED in relation to other synthesis methodologies.

2. Methods: Applying LIFTED

As a user-centred approach to evidence synthesis, LIFTED engages the end-user (education leaders and evidence users) continuously throughout the synthesis process. Engaging stakeholders in the design, implementation, and interpretation of research can increase its relevance, as found in critical interpretive syntheses foregrounding African-based scholarship ([Mitchell, 2025](#)). For our global synthesis, a diverse group of policymakers, implementers, donors, and researchers from more than 70 organisations were engaged at various stages and in different capacities, to ensure our approach aligned with their needs (see [Annex A](#) for a complete list of contributing organisations). Actions included initial scoping discussions to identify evidence gaps and co-develop the research questions, hypotheses, and analytical frameworks; crowdsourcing the most recent and relevant evidence (including evidence only accessible through direct outreach or personal communication); and workshopping initial and final insights and outputs, including this technical report, our [comprehensive synthesis report](#), and the accompanying [high-level guidance](#). The complete synthesis process took place over 20 months, from January 2024 to August 2025. This duration does not represent continuous full-time effort; rather, the level of staff engagement varied across the period, with fluctuations in both the number of personnel involved and the intensity of their contributions. (see more in section on [limitations and lessons learned](#)). **Figure 1** summarises the various steps taken, described in more detail in the sections that follow.

Figure 1. Timeline of LIFTED’s user-centred synthesis process



Research questions and scope

This synthesis emerged from an explicit need and request of education leaders working in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) in development and humanitarian contexts. Following the

publication of Education.org’s first AEP synthesis ([Grant Lewis et al., 2022](#)), education leaders described a need for evidence-based actions to facilitate learners’ transitions from non-formal education systems to formal schools, and within formal education systems. To further define the scope of our next synthesis, in late 2023, we held formal consultations (virtual and in-person) with more than 40 stakeholders from approximately 35 organisations, including government agencies, multilateral and bilateral organisations, international and national NGOs, and research institutes or universities.¹ The research question emerging from these consultations is:

“What evidence-based actions can decision-makers take to help students successfully transition from Accelerated Education Programmes to formal primary and secondary schools?”

Additional supporting research questions, designed around a socio-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) are presented in **Table 2** below.

Table 1. Supporting research questions

Supporting research questions
Microsystem
- How can decision-makers help overcome barriers within marginalised families or communities to achieve successful post-AEP transitions? - How can decision-makers help increase the demand for education at the family, community, and individual level to help facilitate transitions from AEP to formal school?
Mesosystem
- How can decision-makers help overcome barriers between AEPs and formal systems for the most marginalized students? - How can decision-makers improve the readiness of their formal primary and secondary education systems to be better prepared to receive marginalised children in non-formal (AEP) programmes?
Ecosystem
What critical resources or policy architectures are needed to strengthen transition success for the most marginalised?
Macrosystem
How can decision makers address larger cultural values and norms to help facilitate transitions from AEPs to formal school?
Chronosystem
How can decision-makers better prepare for, anticipate, and react to barriers caused by natural and human-made crises?

For this research, accelerated education programmes were defined using [INEE-AEWG’s \(2017\)](#) definition, with a focus on those AEPs that meet three criteria: they deliver a curriculum in an

¹ It should be noted that during the scoping stages, most education leaders consulted were based in sub-Saharan Africa, due to our prior engagement in the region. However, over the course of the research our engagement evolved, and more stakeholders from Latin America and South Asia participated meaningfully in various aspects of the research (e.g., validating key insights and co-developing case studies).

accelerated timeframe, target out-of-school children and youth, and provide pathways back into the formal education system. AEPs are flexible, age-appropriate programmes, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aim to provide access to education for out-of-school children and youth ([INEE-AEWG, 2017](#)). Although we use the term accelerated education programmes (AEPs), we identified over 25 terms used to refer to these education models globally.² All programmes included deliver a curriculum in an accelerated timeframe and target out-of-school children and youth. Some of these programmes also target students in school (especially in Latin America), and offer additional transition pathways, such as those to further skills and vocational training, apprenticeships, self-employment, or formal employment. While the focus of this synthesis is on AEPs that support entry into formal schooling, for those programmes offering multiple transition pathways, evidence was also analysed on alternative transition pathways beyond formal schooling.

The STEP Framework: From an analytical framework to decision-making tool

The information collected during initial consultations and scoping research was analysed and informed the development of a comprehensive issues tree³ that mapped barriers and enablers to learners who transition from accelerated education to formal primary or secondary school. This issue tree informed the development of the research questions, hypothesis and analytical framework. The analytical framework developed was an earlier version of the STEP Framework, which breaks down the learners' transition journey into five stages from their time learning in an AEP (Stage 1), to completing an AEP through a final assessment (Stage 2), to accessing a formal school (Stage 3), enrolling in it (Stage 4), and completing their first year of schooling, so they can progress within the formal education system until completion (Stage 5). This framework served as an analytical tool and was adapted iteratively as new evidence and insights were captured.

Similar to framework-based syntheses, this allowed us to combine *a priori* themes and concepts (those identified through initial consultations and scoping research) with *de novo* themes and concepts (those that newly emerge from the new evidence collected) ([Dixon-Woods, 2011](#)). In doing so, it allowed for initial consultations with stakeholders 'to be explicitly and systematically considered in the analysis, while also facilitating enough flexibility to detect and characterise issues that emerge from the data' (Ibid: p.2). This is discussed in greater depth below on [coding and quality appraisal](#), and an image of the STEP Framework can be found in [Annex B](#).

² Examples include accelerated learning, bridging or gateway programmes (particularly in Francophone West Africa), catch-up classes, complementary or community-based education, equivalency programmes, or alternative learning systems (as well as programme specific names, such as Speed School in Ethiopia and Uganda).

³ An issue tree (also known as a logic tree or hypothesis tree) is a structured, visual tool used to break down a complex question or problem into smaller, more manageable components.

Sourcing evidence

Building on the work of the [International Working Group \(IWG, 2025\)](#), and the landscaping report that informed it ([Education.org, 2023](#)), we define ‘evidence’ as the most relevant and highest-quality available information to inform decisions in LMICs and crisis-affected countries. This includes peer-reviewed research studies, as well as non-peer-reviewed research. It also includes ‘non-research’ or sources that draw on practitioner or expert consensus—such as conference hearings or the results of stakeholder meetings—policy and programme documents, literature reviews, and other evidence sources. These sources, often referred to as ‘grey literature,’⁴ illuminate not only *what works* but also *how, why, and for whom* (see also [Aromateris et al., 2024](#); [Glasofer & Townsend, 2021](#)). We include non-research only when it meets explicit relevance and quality criteria and is triangulated with other sources, so that expert opinion and firsthand experiences complement and add depth to, rather than substitute, scientific research.⁵ Indeed, the added value of this type of evidence is well documented: it can reduce publication bias, increase the comprehensiveness and timeliness of findings, and foster a more balanced picture of available evidence (e.g., [Paez, 2017](#)). To ensure a comprehensive and systematic identification of relevant sources, the sourcing process was conducted in multiple phases over a period of 12 months. Three approaches to sourcing evidence were used and are described below: systematic desk-based searches, outreach and crowdsourcing, and the collection of supplementary evidence.

Systematic desk-based searches

Searches for peer-reviewed sources and non-peer-reviewed sources were conducted simultaneously in May 2024. EBSCOhost was used primarily for peer-reviewed evidence, while websites or repositories of key multilateral and non-governmental organisations working in education in general, and on AEPs in particular, were used to source all other types of evidence. These include UNESCO’s Planipolis, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the World Bank, and Save the Children’s Resource Centre. Google and GoogleScholar were also used to identify relevant types of evidence (peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed), while regional databases, such as African Journals Online (AJOL) and African Education Research Database (AERD), were also prioritised, as these types of local databases are particularly valuable for identifying contextually relevant sources (Stansfield et al., 2012, in [Noyes et al., 2024](#)). [Annex C](#) provides a full list of sourcing platforms used.

⁴ The [IWG guidance \(2025\)](#) notes that the “most widely accepted definition of “grey literature” is the 2010 Prague definition: Grey literature stands for manifold document types produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats that are protected by intellectual property rights, of sufficient quality to be collected and preserved by libraries and institutional repositories, but not controlled by commercial publishers; i.e. where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body (Schöpfel 2010).

⁵ This approach to using non-research draws largely on the Joanna Briggs Institute’s manual for systematic reviews and evidence syntheses in health (Aromateris et al., 2024).

Structured search strings were applied to systematically identify relevant sources. Search terms were based on the [inclusion criteria](#) and informed by an initial scoping of available evidence. For example, we identified 26 terms used globally to refer to accelerated education programmes. Subject matter experts with fluency in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish provided input into the full list of search terms and strings used (see [Annex D. Search terms and strings](#)). This approach helped keep the search as consistent as possible across different databases and languages. The following is an example of a search string used for our synthesis:

("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school") AND ("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE)*

Applying search strings across multiple platforms and languages required adaptation ([Lefebvre et al., 2024](#)). Search environments—from academic databases to general search engines vary in their support for features like Boolean logic⁶ and phrase searching (i.e. using quotation marks to find exact phrases, e.g., "higher education"). As a result, it was necessary to modify or simplify the search strings to suit the technical constraints of each platform.⁷ Where possible, we used filters aligned with our [inclusion criteria](#) to navigate search platforms, for example, geographical areas of focus, or publication data.

For multilingual searches, the search strings were translated into French, Spanish, and Portuguese to broaden coverage and reduce language bias. Translation of terms were provided by team members fluent in each language. All adaptations—whether technical or linguistic—were systematically documented to maintain transparency, reproducibility, and consistency throughout the search process. A second round of desk-based searches were conducted in October 2024 to fill evidence gaps identified in the initial coding of evidence.

Outreach and crowdsourcing

Outreach and crowdsourcing via our institutional partners and professional networks helped identify ongoing studies and relevant evidence not available or easily accessible online (Lefebvre et al., 2024). To do this, a call for evidence was distributed through email and on LinkedIn, with posts in English, Spanish, and French (see [Annex E. Crowdsourcing example](#)). Key global and regional partners, such as INEE's Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), SUMMA in Latin America, and the Pan African Collective for Evidence (PACE) and African Education Research Database (AERD) in sub-Saharan Africa, helped to amplify call for evidence. We conducted two

⁶ For example, using AND (both conditions must be true), OR (at least one condition must be true), and NOT (excludes certain conditions) or truncation (using symbols like * to find word variations, e.g., educat*)

⁷ For instance, on platforms with limited advanced search features, such as Google or AERD, complex search syntax could not be applied. Instead, we ran multiple individual searches using singular keywords or basic keyword combinations to approximate the structured strategy and ensure relevant sources were still captured.

waves of outreach: one at the beginning of the sourcing phase, in parallel with online searches (May 2024), and a second four months into the research, once evidence gaps were identified (October 2024). This second round of outreach was designed to fill initial identified gaps, for example, in relation to learners with disabilities, youth, or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This second call for evidence used the same channels (LinkedIn and e-mails to a tailored and more targeted shortlist of organisations); it was also translated to Arabic with the help of partners from the Queen Rania Foundation.

Supplementary evidence collection

The goal of supplementary sourcing was to capture evidence that may be missed by standard searches due to limitations in indexing, terminology, publication locations and dates, or other reasons. In practice, this meant keeping track of any sources of evidence that we came across that had not appeared in our prior searches. This could include new publications circulated through our networks or newsletters, those identified through consultations and events, including conferences, as well as those that we encountered during data coding and analysis. Although we mined reference lists, this was not done systematically at the beginning, meaning more relevant sources appeared throughout the data analysis process. We also comprehensively reviewed the reference list from our first AEP synthesis ([Grant Lewis et al., 2022](#)), and signed up for GoogleScholar alerts, as this was a useful tool to help identify new evidence made available after the original searches had been conducted ([Lefebvre et al., 2024](#)).

Eligibility screening

The synthesis sought to capture the most relevant and high-quality evidence examining the transition of OOSCY from non-formal accelerated education programmes to formal schools, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and those affected by conflict or crisis. The inclusion criteria considered when screening sources are presented in **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Inclusion/exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion
Date	The year 2016 was selected because it saw the start of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which placed renewed emphasis on out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY), the main target population of accelerated education programmes
Geographic scope	All low- and lower-middle-income countries, according to the World Bank classification, as well as upper-middle and high-income countries classified by Education Cannot Wait as crisis-affected (refer to Annex E for the full list of 99 countries).
Thematic focus	Accelerated education programmes that: (1) target out of school children and (2) offer transition pathways into formal education
Language	English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese (INEE's 5 core languages)

The screening process was done in three phases: (1) initial search results were screened directly on the search interface, (2) after uploading sources deemed relevant to [Zotero](#) (a free, open-source reference management tool), their metadata were completed and then spot-checking occurred to de-duplicate or re-screen sources as needed, and (3) final eligibility for coding and analysis was determined in EPPI Reviewer. Sources were screened using different methods depending on their format:

- **Journal articles** were screened based on their titles and abstracts.
- **Website, blogs, presentations and newsletters** were screened in full.
- **Reports and policy documents** were keyword-searched for terms aligned with our inclusion criteria (e.g., transitions, formal schooling, accelerated education). Where Executive Summaries were provided, these were also screened in full.
- **Videos** were listened to in full; longer videos (e.g., recordings of webinars or events) were also transcribed using an AI software plug-in and reviewed in full.
- **Non-English sources** were screened in their original language if reviewed by someone fluent in that language; otherwise, they were screened using the English translation

Disagreements or uncertain inclusions were resolved by discussion amongst the research team and often required review of the full paper to make a definitive judgement.

We used an Excel spreadsheet to document all sourcing strategies, results, and the screening process ([Lefebvre et al., 2024](#)). This includes details such as the date of the search, the resource used, the number of duplicates identified, the number of sources screened, and the number of sources uploaded to Zotero and EPPI Reviewer. To ensure transparency, we have illustrated the source selection process using a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram ([Page et al., 2021](#)) (see [Annex G. PRISMA Chart](#)). Over 11,000 sources were screened and 387 included after three rounds of eligibility screening.

Evidence coding and quality appraisal

Coding and quality appraisal tools were developed based on the issue tree created from the initial scoping research and expert consultations. Evidence coding and quality appraisal was conducted in a sequential process, depicted in **Figure 2** below. The process began with *Descriptive Thematic Coding* to capture metadata and map key findings, programmatic details and outcomes. This information was then used for an *Initial Quality Appraisal* of the sources, helping us to identify the insights that were most relevant to our research questions and geographic focus, and that included the voices and perspectives of marginalised or under-represented groups (including learners, other education stakeholders, and researchers from the LMICs). Those sources that scored highest on the Initial Quality Appraisal were then subjected to two additional tools: an *Interpretive Thematic Coding* tool and *Final Quality Appraisal* tool. This sequential process was critical because it helped us navigate large quantities of evidence and

prioritise those sources that were most relevant to our research questions and hypotheses, while upholding quality across different types of evidence sources.

Figure 2. A sequential process was used for coding and quality appraisal of evidence



All coding and quality appraisal of the evidence was conducted in EPPI Reviewer. A team of three researchers coded and appraised all evidence, and inter-coder reliability checks were conducted throughout to ensure alignment in the application of the coding and appraising frameworks. The full coding and quality appraisal tools can be found in [Annex H](#).

Descriptive thematic coding

A Descriptive Thematic Coding tool was developed, piloted, and iteratively adapted throughout the coding process. The tool drew on both deductive and inductive codes⁸ to identify: (1) source metadata, (2) programmatic information, (3) reported outcomes, risks and mitigation factors:

- **Metadata codes:** General codes captured metadata regarding the type of source (journal article, report, brief, policy document, etc.), type of authoring institution (academic; firm or for profit; NGO; foundation; government; bilateral or multilateral, etc.), where the authoring institution is based (in LMICs, HICs, or at the national, regional, or international level), the research methodology (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, desk-based or non-research), and the source language.
- **Programmatic information:** General codes also included basic information about the AEP programme(s) examined in the source (e.g., name, and country and region where implemented)
- **High-level analysis:** Descriptive data analysis included coding for:
 - Transition pathways discussed (e.g., transitions to formal primary school, formal secondary school, skills and vocational training, or employment)
 - Risks and mitigations related to the STEP Framework (STEP 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5)
 - Educational outcomes reported (transition rates to formal school, transition rates to alternative pathways, or 'other' learner outcomes)
 - Marginalised group of focus (e.g., girls, forcibly displaced, youth, etc.)

This coding informed the initial gap map and subsequent sourcing (conducted in October 2024). It was also used for the initial quality appraisal, to help identify the sources of evidence with the

⁸ Inductive codes emerged from the evidence itself. Nearly all codes included a 'other' child code; as common themes appeared, they were pulled out to create their own child code (for example, in the 'marginalised group' as more data on learners with disabilities appeared, we created a new child code on 'learners with disabilities').

findings most relevant to the STEP Framework (and broader research questions and hypotheses) and our geographical scope, and most inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives (of learners, but also researchers and other education stakeholders).

Initial quality appraisal

The Initial Quality Appraisal tool drew on the [International Working Group's guidance](#) and included four criteria by which *all* evidence sources should be assessed: (1) purpose, (2) relevance, (3) context, and (4) representation of marginalised groups (see [Annex H](#) for more).

- **Purpose:** Is the purpose of the source clearly stated or implied? If so, is it relevant to the research questions, hypotheses, and analytical frameworks?
- **Relevance:** Are the insights or findings of the source relevant to the research questions, hypotheses and analytical frameworks? Are they timely and new or are they repeating information and evidence, in the same way, as sources already reviewed?
- **Context:** Does the source clearly describe the educational context (e.g., needs of OOSCY or affected population, socio-cultural context, programmatic context, or policy and education system context)? If so, is the context relevant to our geographical scope (i.e. the 99 countries including LMICs and crisis affected contexts) and AEPs of interest?
- **Representation of marginalised groups:** Does the source represent a diversity of perspectives or include the perspectives of marginalised and/or local groups? Is the source authored by or does it include the perspective(s) of underrepresented or marginalised groups (e.g., practitioners, students, girls, students with disabilities/learning differences, youth, refugees, etc.)?

Each of the criteria was rated using a scale of 0–2, where 0 means the source did *not* meet the criteria or it was *unclear* whether the source met the criteria, 1 meant the source *somewhat* met the criteria, and 2 meant the source *fully* met the criteria. The highest possible score across the four criteria is 8. All sources that scored 5 points or more passed through to the Interpretative Thematic Coding tool described below. Those sources scoring 4 points or fewer were ‘filtered out’—not coded further but still considered as secondary sources in the final analysis and write-up to ensure insights were comprehensive.

Interpretive thematic coding

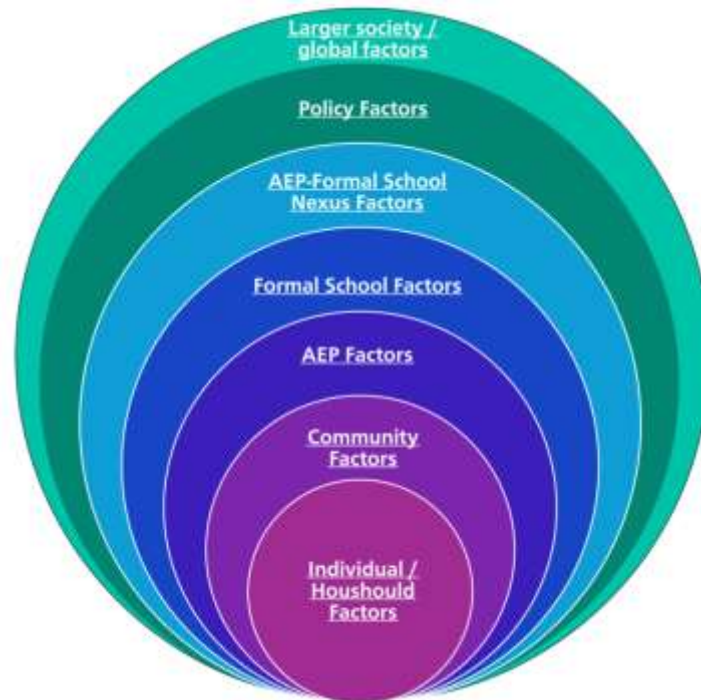
The Interpretive Thematic Coding tool was also piloted and adapted iteratively, drawing on a combination of both deductive and inducted codes across three areas: (1) reported outcomes, (2) transition risks and mitigation factors, and (3) broader policy related issues. These are described below:

- **Reported outcomes:** if the source provides data on transitions from AEPs to formal primary or secondary school, transitions from AEPs to alternative pathways (e.g., skill and

vocational training or work), or other AEP outcomes, including on enrolment, cognitive learning, non-cognitive or social-emotional learning, progression, completion, etc.

- **Transition risks and mitigation factors:** whether enabling or constraining factors along the various elements of the STEP Framework were identified, and how they were mapped across an adapted socio-ecological framework (see **Figure 3** on the next page for a simple illustration and [Annex H](#) for the complete coding framework; factors at the AEP and school levels were based on our previous AEP synthesis which identified nine components of effective AEPs [[Grant Lewis et al., 2022](#)):
- **Broader policy related issues:** including evidence on cost-effectiveness, scalability, sustainability, and/or whether the source discusses the appropriateness of formal school transition pathways in comparison to transitions to an alternative pathway (e.g., work or skills and vocational training)

Figure 3. Adapted socio-ecological framework to map transition risks and mitigations



Final quality appraisal

The Final Quality Appraisal tool also drew on [guidance developed by the International Working Group](#) and involved applying two of the same criteria and five unique criteria to each source, depending on the type of source or research methodology. For example:

- All sources were assessed for **limitations** and **biases**.
- The **Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)** was used to assess the quality of all empirical or primary research, with five unique criteria depending on the study design:

qualitative, quantitative (randomised control trials, non-randomised studies, descriptive quantitative studies) or mixed methods research.

- All other sources (e.g., non-research and desk-based research) were assessed against **five criteria established by the IWG**: author, date, transparency of source of information, transparency of description, and soundness of argument.

After each source was appraised against the above criteria, a final assessment was conducted to identify whether the source should be 'accepted,' 'accepted with reservations,' 'probably not accepted,' or 'rejected.' While the results of this appraisal are explored in [Section 3](#), the full appraisal tool with a description of each criterion can be found in [Annex H](#).

3. Results from applying LIFTED

This section presents the results from applying LIFTED. In other words, it presents the methodological results, not the substantive findings of the synthesis itself (which can be found in our [comprehensive synthesis report](#) and accompanying [high-level guidance](#).) The focus in this section is on what changed by using LIFTED—how it broadened the evidence base, amplified under-represented voices, strengthened diversity and relevance, and set standards for non-peer-reviewed work—compared to what a standard review would have captured. At the same time, it points to some of the practical and systemic challenges encountered. Key results are structured under five insights presented below.

Insight #1. LIFTED expanded the evidence base, deepening our knowledge of the STEP Framework, while drawing on more diverse contexts.

By combining academic databases, multilingual grey literature, and tailored crowdsourcing, LIFTED surfaced a substantially larger and more diverse set of sources.

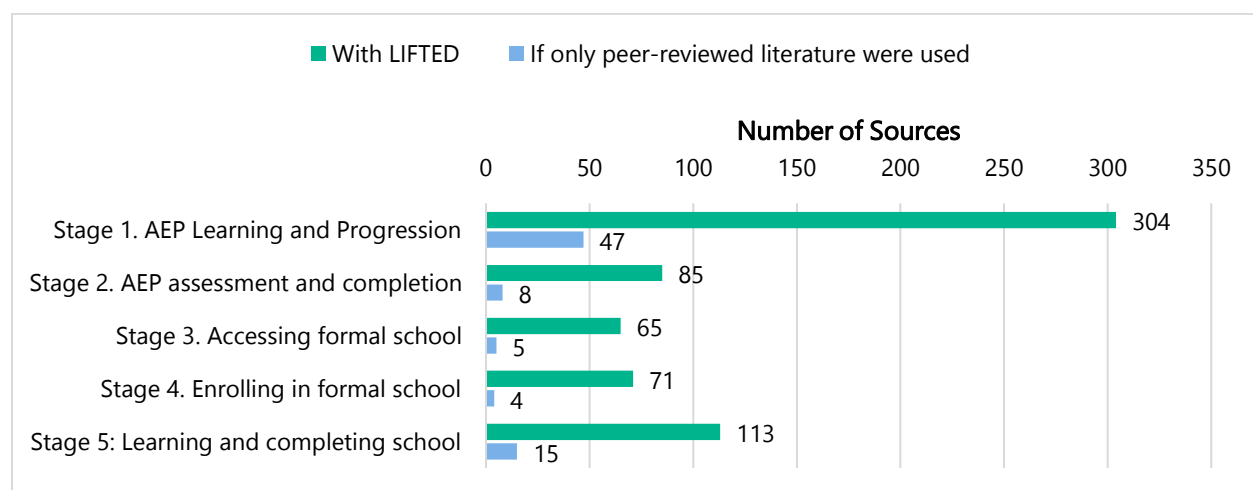
Supporting results:

- We found **more than 7 times as much evidence** by drawing on more than peer-reviewed evidence. The large numbers of reports points to the importance of programmatic evidence which can increase the timeliness and relevance of findings.
- By expanding beyond peer-reviewed evidence we uncovered **more than 10 times as many evidence sources on critical stages of a learner's transition journey**, which would have been largely invisible otherwise.
- Evidence was included from **68 countries, including 40 countries that would have been excluded had we only draw on peer-reviewed evidence**. Nevertheless, evidence from many of these countries remains thin, as the sources reviewed from 14 countries did not pass through our Initial Appraisal tool.

We found more than seven times as much evidence by drawing on more than peer-reviewed evidence. Of the 387 sources included, only 52 were peer-reviewed; 335 (or 87%) were not peer reviewed. Just over half (56%) were research, while 44% were non-research.

By expanding beyond peer-reviewed evidence we uncovered exponentially more evidence on critical stages of a learner’s transition journey, which would have been largely invisible otherwise (**Figure 4**). LIFTED unveiled 10 times as much evidence on a learner’s assessment and completion of AEPs (Stage 2), 13 times as much evidence on learner’s access to formal school (Stage 3), and nearly 18 times as much evidence on their enrolment in formal school (Stage 4).

Figure 4. Evidence across the STEP Framework, with and without LIFTED



Using the LIFTED approach, we were able to include evidence from 40 countries that would have been missed if we had only relied on peer-reviewed sources. However, evidence from 14 of these countries did not pass through the Initial Appraisal tool for deeper coding, meaning they were used as secondary sources in the final analysis (see more in [Quality Appraisal](#) section below).⁹ The 151 sources selected for deeper analysis covered a total of 54 countries: almost half of these countries (n=32) were from sub-Saharan Africa, divided equally amongst Eastern and Southern Africa (n=16) and Western and Central Africa (n=16). Additionally, ten countries were from Latin America, nine from MENA, eight from East Asia and the Pacific and six from South Asia. Ghana (n=26) was the country with most evidence, and 34 countries only had three evidence sources or fewer.

The absence of literature from the MENA region is also reflected in the language of the sources reviewed: we found no sources written in Arabic. Of the 151 sources included, most were in English (n=140), with few in Spanish (n=7) and French (n=4). A limitation of this is that we did not double-code for sources available in multiple languages (we generally included the English

⁹ Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Djibouti, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Mozambique, Rwanda, Syria, Yemen

version and coded it as such). [Annex J](#) provides a full list of the 68 countries with evidence, the number of sources initially included, the number of sources appraised out, and the number selected for deeper analysis, per country.

Insight #2. LIFTED amplified experiences of under-represented groups of researchers, policymakers, and learners from LMICs and crisis-affected contexts.

LIFTED's equity-first design increased the share of authors from LMICs and crisis-affected countries and captured more evidence on marginalised learners.

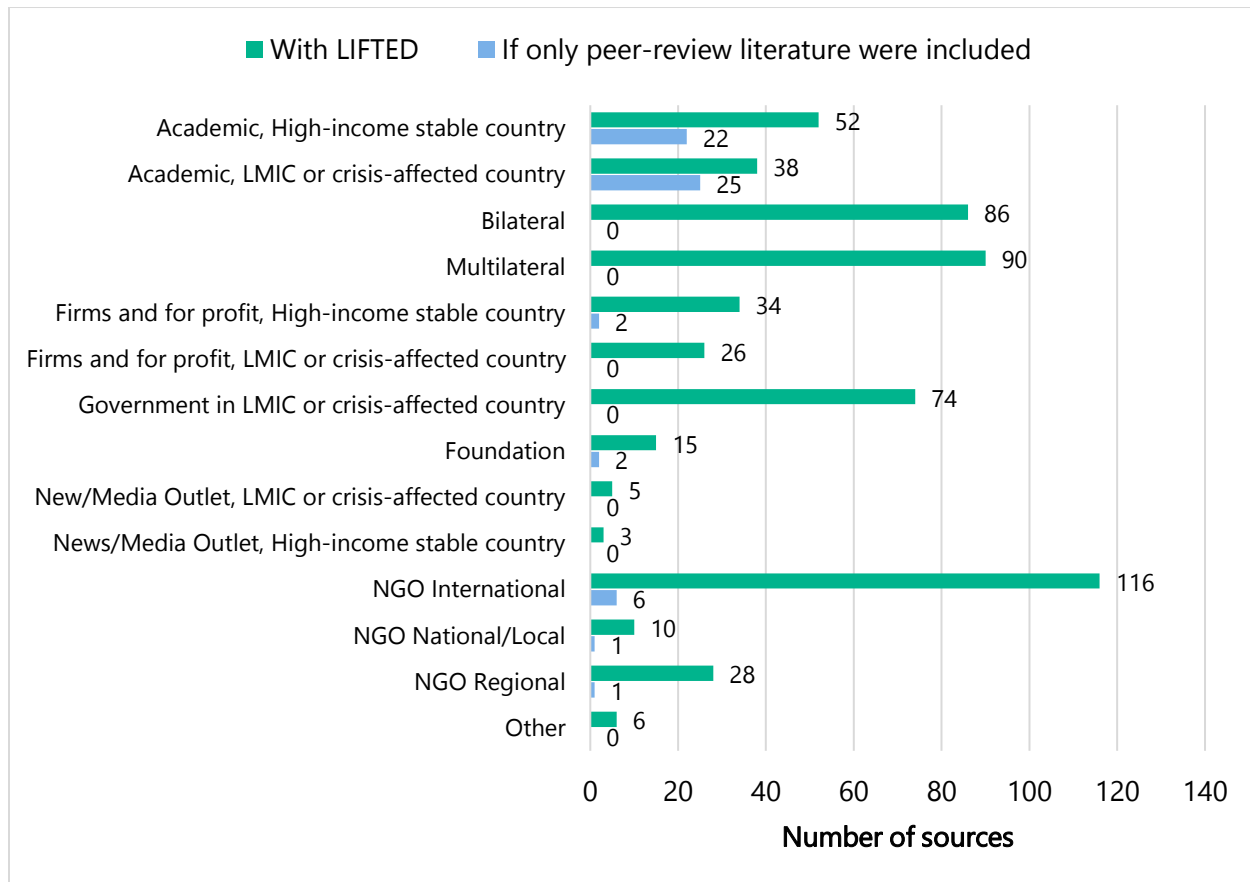
Supporting results:

- LIFTED captured evidence from more than **3 times as many authors** than synthesis approaches that draw on peer-reviewed evidence alone.
- LIFTED helped to capture **more evidence generated by actors based in LMICs and crisis-affected contexts**, including governments, local researchers, NGOs, or regional networks based. Despite this, evidence remains dominated by actors from HICs and stable contexts, though LMIC-HIC partnerships are emerging.
- LIFTED helped to capture more evidence on **marginalised learners**, especially girls. At the same time, it revealed a need for more disaggregated data or evidence of effective interventions for boys, learners with disabilities, forcibly displaced learners, and youth.

LIFTED captured evidence from a larger and more diverse group of authors. By expanding beyond peer-reviewed evidence, we found evidence from more than three times as many authors than from the peer-reviewed literature alone. Of the 387 sources included, there were 182 different types of authoring organisations: 137 were from the non-peer reviewed evidence, and 50 from the peer-reviewed literature.

By drawing on more than peer-reviewed literature, LIFTED also captured evidence produced by a more evidence producers from LMICs and crisis-affected countries. As **Figure 5** shows, LIFTED captured more evidence sources generated by governments (n=74) and researchers (n=38) in these countries, firms and for-profit institutes (n=26) such as Dalan Development Consultants in Sierra Leone, regional NGOs (n=28) such as the Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA) based in Nigeria, and local and national NGOs (n=10). Our synthesis would not have included evidence from many of these actors had it been limited to peer-reviewed literature. Of the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis, 62 (41%) included at least one author from an LMIC or crisis-affected country (governments, regional, national or local NGOs, as well as firms and for profits or academic institutes).

Figure 5. Evidence generated by different authors, with and without LIFTED



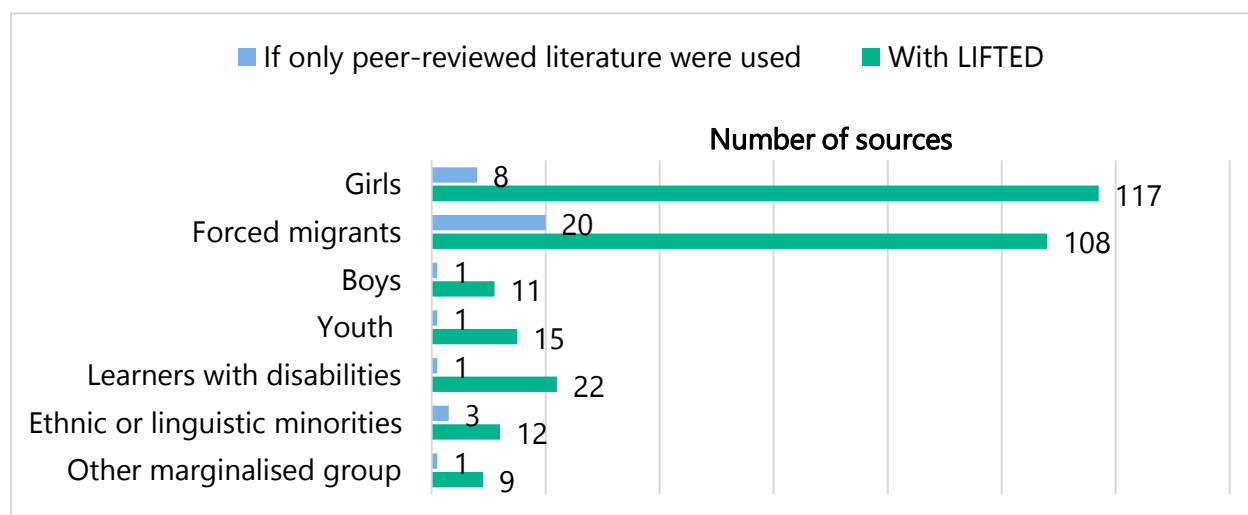
Most sources collected are still dominated by actors based in high-income countries with stable contexts (i.e. not affected by crisis). Of the 151 sources reviewed, 127 (or 84%) included at least one author from high-income countries, especially bilateral organisations such as the International Development Research Council (IDRC) in Canada and the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) in the UK, as well as international NGOs, such as International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, and Save the Children, multilateral organisations, such as United Nations agencies (e.g., UNICEF) and academic institutes (usually universities) in the high-income countries and stable contexts.

A promising trend in the evidence is the emergence of research partnerships across high-income countries and LMICs or crisis-affected contexts. For example, a lot of the evidence published by IDRC, who led the GPE-KIX research, was co-authored with Dalan Development Consultants and CSEA. Indeed, when analysing the year that each evidence source was produced, we see a large spike in the evidence generated from 2021 to 2022. We conclude that this is likely due to two reasons: first, the GPE-KIX first cohort began in 2019, but started to rapidly publish its research in 2021 and 2022 ([GPE-KIX & IDRC, 2022](#)); second, recovery from the

COVID-19 pandemic meant that travel restrictions were lifted and more data collection was possible soon after.

LIFTED allowed us to capture more experiences and perspectives of marginalised learners, especially girls. As **Figure 6** shows, the number of evidence sources focusing on girls multiplied by more than tenfold, while the number of sources focusing on forcibly displaced learners grew fivefold. The number of sources on boys, youth, and learners with disabilities, as well as ethnic minorities or other marginalised groups also increased when using the LIFTED approach. Had we drawn on peer-reviewed evidence alone, these marginalised groups would have been largely excluded from the evidence base.

Figure 6. Evidence on marginalised groups, with and without LIFTED



Of the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis, all but 10 reported individual or household level factors that impact AEP learners' transitions. **The most common reported factors were related to gender (n=99), mostly in relation to girls, and socioeconomic level (n=94). Similarly, of the sources reporting outcomes, the majority (n=102) provide gender-disaggregated quantitative or qualitative data, mostly in relation to girls, and often without comparable data for boys. Disaggregation based on other factors were less common,** especially data disaggregated by household or AEP location (n=31), learner age (n=30), disability status (n=26), household socio-economic level (n=22), learner grade level (n=17), and learner ethnicity, language, or displacement status (n=16). In total 16 sources compared outputs across other types of vulnerabilities, such as learner's access to documentation, whether they are married, orphaned, heads of households, or members of a single-parent household, how long they have been out of school, or the education level of their parents/caregivers. Importantly, disaggregation was often provided to few of the reported outcomes, and not all—and transition outcomes were rarely disaggregated or compared across different learner profiles and vulnerabilities.

Insight #3. LIFTED strengthened diversity and relevance of the insights.

By assessing sources against context, purpose, relevance, and Inclusion of marginalised voices, LIFTED elevated evidence that matters for decision-making but is often overlooked:

Supporting results:

- The **relevance criterion** was decisive in LIFTED's Appraisal Tool, ensuring the synthesis prioritised evidence that would further our understanding of the STEP Framework, and effective solutions for facilitating successful transitions from AEPs to formal school.
- The **context criterion** was important for adding nuance, and even sources scoring partially well on the context criterion were selected for deeper analysis.
- Sources of evidence that scored well on the **marginalised voices criterion** were consistently more likely to be selected for deeper analysis, suggesting equity and inclusion was adequately prioritised in LIFTED's Appraisal Tool.
- More than half (54%) the 151 sources that passed through the LIFTED Initial Appraisal were **reports**, pointing to the importance of programmatic evidence.

The 'relevance' criterion was particularly important in the Initial Appraisal Tool. All but seven sources that scored 'Yes' on relevance were selected for deeper analysis (see **Table 3** below). Relevance of the findings were often more important than alignment with the source's 'purpose.' In fact, there were many sources whose 'purpose' initially seemed aligned with our research questions, in that they focused on AEPs. However, the evidence and emerging findings from these sources did not say anything specific to learners after they finish the programme. A lot of the evidence that was initially collected to address Step 1 of the STEP Framework (learning and progression), did not pass through the Initial Appraisal tool, because they focused almost entirely on immediate impacts, rather than long-term impacts post-transition. Likewise, in a few rare cases, where the 'purpose' of the source did not align with our research questions (i.e. did not focus on transitions), the evidence may still provide 'relevant' insights related to transitions or ensuring the long-term success of learners after completing an AEP. By 'repurposing' studies to explore issues outside their primary focus, our approach resonates with critical interpretive syntheses approaches (Mitchell, 2025).

The context criterion also added nuance. Many sources coded 'Somewhat' on context were still selected for deeper analysis (n=57), showing that even partial context could make a source worth exploring further—especially when combined with strong relevance or purpose. 'Context,' however, can mean many things, from AEP, to formal school, policy, or a learner's household and community context. Future iterations of the Initial Appraisal tool may consider using multiple criteria for 'context' to account for which sources provide information on these various elements.

Table 3. Results of Initial Appraisal Tool, by criteria and whether sources were selected for deeper analysis

CRITERION	UNCLEAR		NO		SOMEWHAT		YES	
	Not selected	Selected	Not selected	Selected	Not selected	Selected	Not selected	Selected
Purpose	0	0	14	0	199	44	23	107
Relevance	0	0	49	0	180	37	7	114
Context	0	0	58	2	161	57	17	92
Representation of marginalised groups	4	0	68	4	151	72	13	75

Sources that scored ‘yes’ or ‘somewhat’ on the representation of marginalised groups criterion were consistently more likely to be selected for deeper analysis. Among those coded ‘Yes’ 75 were selected for deeper analysis, compared to 13 that were not. Even at the ‘Somewhat’ level, 72 were selected for deeper analysis, compared to 151 that were not (see more in the next paragraph below). This pattern highlights that explicit attention to equity was treated as a value-adding feature, reinforcing the very purpose of LIFTED, to elevate the voices and experiences of marginalised groups, including not only learners, but also practitioners, governments, and researchers from LMICs and crisis-affected countries.

The ‘somewhat’ scoring option served its purpose, as it did not guarantee inclusion of a source, but did not automatically disqualify it either. For example, 57 sources that scored ‘somewhat’ on the context criterion were selected for deeper analysis while 161 were excluded. This shows that partial or weaker contextualisation could still make a source useful when combined with other strengths, such as clear purpose, strong relevance, or the inclusion of marginalised voices and experiences. In practice, ‘Somewhat’ functioned as a conditional middle ground, where judgment was applied to weigh the overall value of the source.

Programmatic evidence proved particularly relevant, with reports making up more than half of the sources that passed through the Initial Appraisal. The 151 sources selected for deeper analysis spanned diverse methodologies: more than a third (36%) were mixed-methods, followed by non-research (23%), qualitative research (21%), desk-based research (13%), and quantitative research (7%). Amongst the quantitative and mixed methods studies were also 22 experimental or quasi-experimental studies (e.g., randomised control trials or tracer studies). Over half of the 151 sources were reports (n=81 or 54%) — some were desk-based research or non-research, but most were programmatic evaluations (n=49). Indeed, programmatic evidence can increase the timeliness and relevance of findings in comparison to peer-reviewed evidence that often takes longer to disseminate ([Paez, 2017](#)). The other sources included briefs (n=30),

journal articles (n=25), policy documents (n=5) blogs (n=5), as well as one book chapter, dissertation, presentation, newsletter, and website.

Insight #4. Enhancing equity while upholding rigor in evidence synthesis is possible.

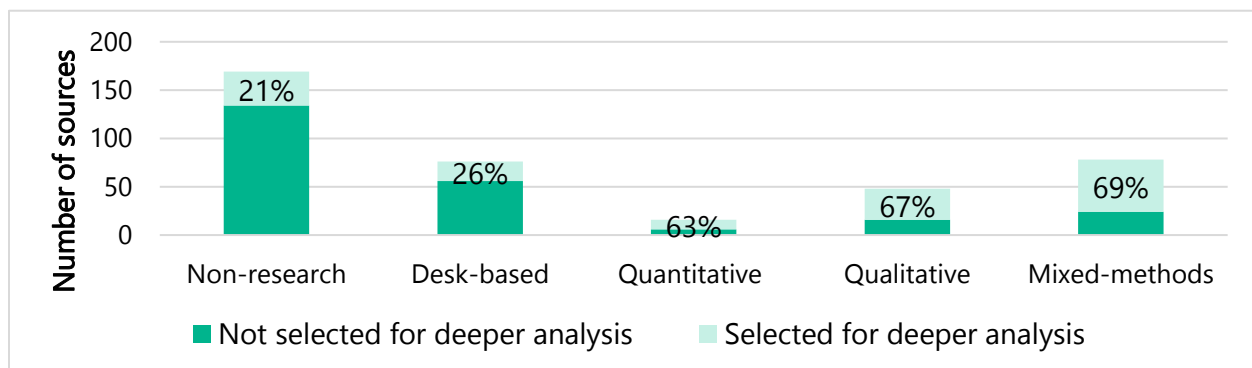
LIFTED's phased Appraisal Tool acts as a quality-setting mechanism, setting standards for non-research and valuing transparency across diverse types of evidence sources:

Supporting results:

- The Initial Appraisal tool served as an important way of filtering the highest quality **non-research** to accompany the research base. Nearly 4 in 5 non-research evidence sources were dropped at the Initial Appraisal stage.
- **Reports and journal articles** were amongst the most relevant.
- Few evidence sources transparently report **limitations or biases**, reinforcing the need for Appraisal Tools that consider more than just methodological quality.

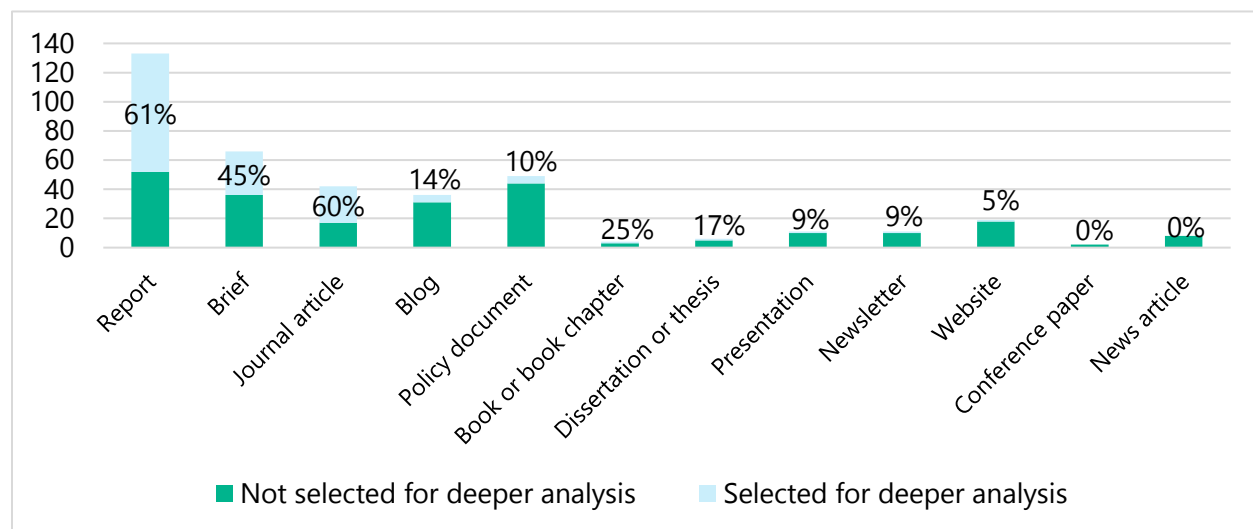
The Initial Appraisal tool served as an important way of filtering the highest quality non-research to complement the research evidence. Of the 387 sources initially included in the synthesis, almost half were non-research (44%), followed by mixed-methods (20%), desk-based (20%), and qualitative research (12%). Few were quantitative (n=16 or 4% of the 387 initially included). After using our Initial Appraisal tool, however, many of the non-research items were filtered out. Only 21% of all non-research evidence initially included were selected for deeper analysis (**Figure 7**). In other words, nearly 4 in 5 non-research sources (79%) did not pass through our Initial Appraisal Tool. This was often because these sources provided piecemeal monitoring and evaluation data, lacked depth to their arguments, or focused on challenges (many of which had been repeated in other research sources) rather than new solutions or nuances to findings already supported by the wider evidence base. Likewise, just 26% of desk-based research was analysed in depth, compared with much higher rates for empirical evidence: mixed-methods (69%), qualitative (67%) and quantitative (63%) studies.

Figure 7. Proportion of evidence selected for deeper analysis, by type of research



Reports and journal articles were most likely to be selected for deeper analysis and thus demonstrate similar levels of quality and relevance. Figure 8 below presents the proportion of sources selected for deeper analysis, by type of source (report, journal article, blog, etc.). Blogs, presentations, newsletters, websites, conference papers, and news articles generally tended to score lower on the Initial Quality Appraisal criteria and were often filtered out and used as secondary sources of evidence. Again, this was another way of ensuring that only the most relevant and highest quality non-research was selected for deeper analysis and would complement the research evidence.

Figure 8. Proportion of evidence selected for deeper analysis, by type of source



The results of the Final Appraisal tool applied to the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis suggest the following:

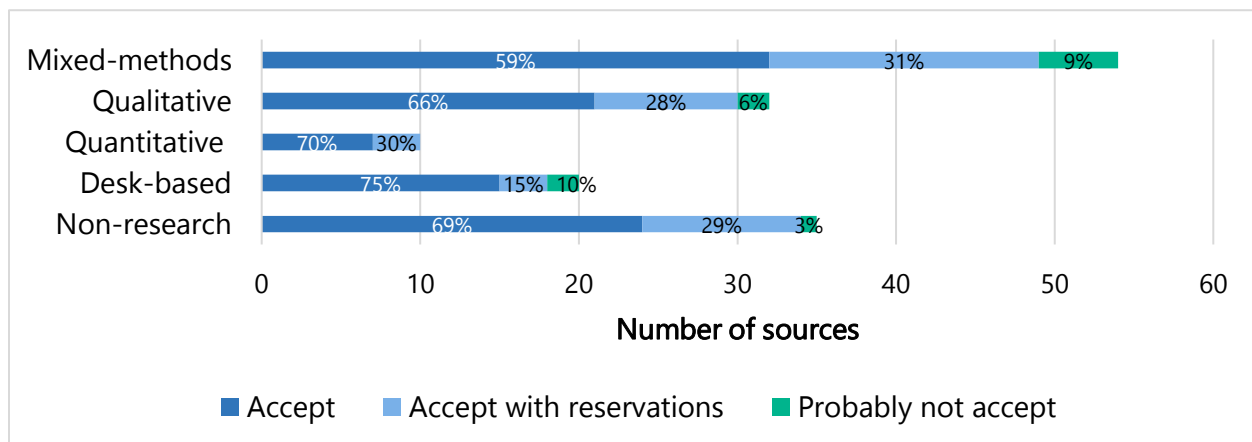
- Limitations are not consistently reported in non-research or research, except for quantitative studies.** Of the 151 sources, 50 sources scored yes (33%), 41 scored somewhat (27%), 57 scored no (38%), and several were unclear (n=3, <2%). Amongst the sources scoring 'no' on Limitations were non-research (61%), desk-based research (47%), qualitative research (41%), and—to a lesser extent—mixed-methods research (35%). Although only ten quantitative studies were selected for deeper analysis, none scored 'no' on the Limitations criterion: 4 scored somewhat and 6 scored yes.
- Biases were rarely reported across all sources, especially desk-based research.** Overall, less than 15% or 22 of the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis scored 'yes' on the Biases criterion, with 36 scoring 'somewhat' (24%) and more than half scoring 'no' (82 or 54%) or unclear (11 or 7%). When looking at different types of sources we see common gaps across all types of evidence: 85% of desk-based research, 66% of non-research, 56% of mixed-methods research, 56% of qualitative research, and 50% of quantitative research, all scored 'no' or 'unclear.'

These findings have implications for researchers, emphasising the need for more transparent reporting on biases and limitations in types of evidence, research and non-research. It also points to the importance of creating appraisal tools that look beyond the quality of the research methods alone. Any appraisal tool is only assessing what has been reported in a publication and therefore there are limitations inherent in the appraisal process itself ([Carrol et al., 2011](#)). By expanding beyond a focus on methodological quality alone, to account for relevance of the evidence context and insights, our LIFTED approach resembles *critical interpretive syntheses* that push to further our understanding of a phenomenon ([Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)), in this case transitions along the STEP Framework.

Lastly, in relation to the MMAT and five criteria for non-research studies, below we provide a summary of key insights, based on the overall assessment, and whether sources were judged to be 'accepted', 'accepted with reservations' 'probably not accepted' or 'declined/rejected':

- **There was high acceptance overall.** The majority of sources across research and non-research were 'Accepted' (66%) or 'Accepted with reservations' (28%). Less than 7% (n=10) were judged as 'Probably not accept,' No sources were rejected based on quality alone, again showing similarities to critical interpretive synthesis methodologies ([Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)).
- **No major differences were noted based on type of research methodology** (see **Figure 9**). Mixed methods sources, which were the most numerous, also showed the most variation in quality, with 59% accepted, 31% accepted with reservations, and 9% probably not accepted. Quantitative research, though few in numbers, were all either accepted (70%) or accepted with reservations (30%). Non-research sources often met their respective criteria, with 69% being accepted, 28% accepted with reservations, and only 6% probably not accepted.

Figure 9. Final assessment of sources selected for deeper analysis, by type of source



The implications of the above results suggest that the evidence base is inclusive of diverse research methods and evidence sources, with non-research filling important contextual gaps. The LIFTED Appraisal Tool allowed us to concentrate on the most relevant and inclusive sources of evidence, while upholding rigor.

Insight #5. Systemic gaps in the AEP evidence base persist.

Despite expanding the evidence base, LIFTED revealed systemic gaps on AEP transitions:

Supporting results:

- Most evidence focuses on the **STEP Framework** Stage 1 (experience in AEPs) and Stage 5 (in formal schools). Gaps remain in Stages 2–4, limiting our understanding of key transition stages and the experiences of learners who do not make it to school.
- The most common topic in the evidence is the role of **communities**, and the need for AEP and formal school providers to collaborate with communities and with each other. Less is known about **school leaders**.
- Additional evidence gaps across the AEP, school, and government levels include lack of evidence on effective strategies for developing robust **data systems**, or innovative and sustainable **funding models**.
- Few studies tracked **long-term impacts** on learners. The most common reported outcomes were AEP enrolment, transitions to formal school, and learning in AEPs, with a growing evidence base on social-emotional learning and life skills.

While the LIFTED Appraisal Tool allowed us to prioritise the most relevant evidence on AEP learners' transitions to formal school, various evidence gaps remain. This section explores the coding results of the 151 sources that were passed through the Initial Appraisal Tool and were selected for deeper analysis. These were the 151 sources identified as the most relevant to our research questions and the STEP Framework for analysis. This section focuses particularly on thematic and methodological gaps, while the full results of the coding framework can be found in [Annex K](#).

Most evidence focuses on the STEP Framework Stage 1 (experience in AEPs) and Stage 5 (in formal schools). Gaps remain in Stages 2–4, limiting our understanding of the experiences of learners who do not transition, as well as effective AEP assessment and certification and formal school screening and enrolment processes, or how to overcome structural challenges regarding limited school infrastructure, which is the most common reported school-level challenge (n=47).

The most common topic explored across the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis was the role of communities (n=108), or how AEP providers and school actors engage with communities and each other (n=66). Additionally, almost half of all sources explored the role of national government actors (n=77), and to a lesser extent the subnational government actors

(n=42), as well as AEP policies and legal frameworks (n=44) and the broader policy architecture (n=33) that help anchor AEP efforts in governments' education strategy and/or regulate the quality of AEPs within countries. Parents and caregivers (n=78), and teachers in AEPs (n=98) were commonly explored. More evidence is needed particularly on the role of school leaders (n=15) and teachers in formal schools (n=29), as well as certain types of community-based organisations, including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), women's rights groups, and other civil society actors.

More than a third of the sources selected for deeper analysis did not report on school-level factors (n=55 or 36%), reemphasising the tendency of AEP evidence to focus more on AEP learners' experience in the AEP itself, rather than after completion of the programme. Of the sources exploring school-level factors, the most common factors examined were formal school infrastructure and classroom conditions (n=47) as well as the costs of formal schools (n=44).

Sustainable financing is a major challenge, with limited evidence on impactful efforts. Few sources of evidence examine effective financing or funding mechanisms at the school level (n=3) or innovative and joint funding models across AEPs and formal schools (n=12). Sources were more likely to examine the costs of AEPs (n=42) or AEP funding and budgeting (n=38). While 43 sources provided quantitative or qualitative data on cost-effectiveness or the value of investing in AEPs, data is often based on estimates or with limited details on how costs or results are measured. More transparent reporting by donors and implementers is needed to enable meaningful cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses.

There is limited evidence on how to design robust data systems. Few sources of evidence addressed issues related to monitoring AEP learners in formal schools (n=7 or <5%), integrating AEP data into national education management information systems (EMIS) (n=14 or <10%), or data sharing across AEP and formal school actors (n=21 or 14%). These gaps reflect wider implementation challenges, as few governments have integrated AEP or non-formal education data into formal education data systems. They also limit our understanding of how schools and school leaders can collect and use data for decision-making or to allocate resources to support AEP learners and the wider student population.

Additional notable gaps include:

- The use of technology in AEPs (n=10) and in formal schools (n=1) to enhance access to quality teaching and learning or enhance data systems.
- Fostering positive relationships between AEP learners and their peers in formal school, while AEP learners are still in the AEP (n=15).

Taken together, these results demonstrate that LIFTED produces an evidence base that is broader, more equitable, and more decision-relevant than standard approaches. At the same

time, it makes visible where global knowledge remains thin, offering both a stronger foundation for decisions today and a clearer agenda for future research investment.

4. Limitations and lessons learned

Limitations

In terms of the LIFTED methodology, various challenges presented themselves.¹⁰ Firstly, we did not have our own access to academic databases, and instead worked through partners, limiting our direct engagement with a lot of the peer reviewed literature. Indeed, we often ran into paywalls when trying to access journal articles, even when using Google or GoogleScholar. Another challenge was the limited capacity within the research team, which consisted of four core members with fluctuating time dedicated to this work: three coders and an information specialist who conducted all searches and managed the Zotero library. Some of these challenges are explored further in the section below on [lessons learned](#), with implications for future iterations of the LIFTED methodology.

Lastly, the different searching approaches used across websites and databases, as well as the critical role played by crowdsourcing evidence through direct outreach, reflect the challenges and advantages inherent in sourcing non-peer-reviewed evidence and ultimately limit the synthesis's replicability. Replicability in evidence syntheses is already a problematised concept ([Puljak & Pieper, 2022](#)); our syntheses prioritised contextual relevance and the development of a framework to support education leaders and evidence users, pulling on approaches inherent to *critical interpretive* and *framework-based* synthesis approaches ([Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)).

Lessons Learned

#1. Seeing the value of non-peer-reviewed evidence and 'non-research'

Of the 151 sources selected for deeper analysis, 27 were peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or dissertations. While these sources provided valuable insights to our evidence review, they limit our understanding of the various risks and mitigations that span the STEP Framework. For example, only six peer reviewed studies examined issues related to AEP assessment (Step 2) and

¹⁰ Additional limitations in relation to the topic of AEPs include: (1) identifying what education interventions fit into our definition of AEPs was challenging, as sources did not always clearly identify whether the curriculum was condensed or delivered in an accelerated timeframe, or whether they targeted out-of-school learners and offered a pathway back to the formal system; (2) some AEPs also include adult education components, making it difficult to tell if the evidence pertained to these learners or the learners in our target group; (3) AEPs tend to operate under multiple names or acronyms, complicating verification and duplication checks; (4) many AEPs are embedded within broader out-of-school responses, or non-formal education frameworks, making it difficult to isolate data specific to the accelerated component; (5) reported transition figures were often unclear—whether annual, per-cohort, or cumulative—limiting comparability. How 'transitions' were defined was also inconsistent, with some reporting *enrolment* in formal school, and others reporting *eligibility* to transition (i.e., AEP completion).

three explored the availability of formal schools for AEP learners (Step 3) or enrolment and placement processes (Step 4), suggesting that had we depended on this literature alone, we would know very little about learners' transition journey.

Expanding beyond peer-reviewed evidence also allowed us to include more authors from LMICs and crisis-affected countries, and more evidence that draws on the experiences and perspectives of under-represented groups, including marginalised learners—girls, forcibly displaced learners, youth, and children and adolescents with disabilities (see **Figure 5** and **Figure 6** above).

Lastly, sources we classify as 'non-research' also bolstered our insights and added nuance to the findings. Though described as 'non-research' since they do not provide original (or new) evidence, many of them draw on evidence reviews or re-package research findings.¹¹ While other researchers have pointed to the value in 'non-research' reviews ([Aromateris et al., 2024](#); [Glasofer & Townsend, 2021](#)) we found limited literature that looks more closely at *why or how different types of non-research sources add value to an evidence synthesis*. While we plan to further explore this, two immediate contributions can be noted: firstly, original sources of evidence, cited in literature reviews, are not always available online or through open-access, giving us access to a wider evidence-based; second, when drawing on findings across studies, these sources can serve as a helpful comparison, to see whether the insights garnered in our own synthesis, reflect those of other reviews conducted prior. At the same time, we recognise potential limitations of this approach, including reporting biases (i.e. some briefs or reviews may only report positive outcomes of original studies) as well as the challenge of double-counting certain findings, which we explore below in Lesson #5.

Recommendation for future applications of LIFTED: Continue drawing on non-peer-reviewed and non-research sources, mining reference lists and looking for studies (online and through direct outreach) as extensively as possible. Allocate sufficient time to contact authors where the original references cannot be located online. Add a code to differentiate between original research, and derivatives made based on an original study to avoid biases inherent in double reporting (see more below in Lesson #5).

#2. Casting the net *too* wide

Searching for non-peer-reviewed evidence can be time-consuming ([Nair & Borkar, 2023](#)) and it is important that search strategies strike a balance between striving for comprehensiveness and maintaining relevance ([Lefebvre et al., 2024](#)). An important lesson from the review process was that our initial sourcing strategy may have been overly expansive. By conducting desk-based research on peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed evidence simultaneously, we generated a

¹¹ Examples include GEC's final reflections, study briefs, or learning briefs. In the learning briefs, the authors note: 'While these Learning Briefs are rooted in both quantitative and qualitative evidence, they are not research papers or evidence reports. Rather, they provide a synthesis of learning from GEC intervention designs and implementation approaches that have been paramount for supporting improvements in girls' learning' ([GEC, 2023](#): p.2).

very large pool of initial sources (over 11,000). While this ensured breadth of the evidence covered, it also introduced potential inefficiencies, especially within the context of a small research team and limited capacity. Nearly 80% of non-research materials identified through the sourcing were later deprioritised during the Initial Appraisal, largely due to their limited relevance or depth of insights provided. In retrospect, a sequential approach may be more efficient—first mapping the body of research evidence (both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed), and then strategically turning to non-research sources to fill identified gaps in thematic coverage, geographic focus, or population groups (such as girls, refugees, learners with disabilities, teachers, or policymakers). This would have preserved the benefits of including diverse perspectives—for example, blogs written by practitioners or government policy reports—while ensuring that these sources added value rather than duplicating arguments already well established in the research evidence.

Recommendation for future applications of LIFTED: Sequence sourcing for research and non-research, allowing time to conduct initial gap maps that inform a more focused sourcing of non-research evidence. To mitigate publication biases, continue to crowdsource and conduct calls for evidence, search for non-peer-reviewed evidence, and include sources in languages beyond English. When screening non-research sources, consider using more focused criteria, where those included are providing new and relevant insights that will allow them to pass through the Initial Appraisal. Otherwise, you spend time including and coding sources, that will end up being excluded anyway. Monitor and track time spent on different stages of the synthesis process to develop a better understanding of capacity requirements.

#3. Encountering practical challenges to searching and sourcing

Locating some of the evidence—both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed—posed significant challenges due to their dispersed nature, lack of standardised search tools, and variable quality and accessibility. Key challenges to online searching include cybersecurity, interface limitations, and paywalls blocking access to journal articles. Firstly, cybersecurity was a challenge as some websites (especially news and media websites) were not secure, introducing malware to the devices being used to search. Additionally, some organisations' websites feature a structured search interface which is not always effective due to the user being guided by their defined filters rather than giving the searcher the option to create complex search strings with Boolean operators. AJOL, for example, relies on Google Search functionality, which lacks the structured features found in academic databases—such as advanced filtering, controlled vocabularies, and precision search capabilities. This made it difficult to perform refined or complex queries.¹²

¹² The process of screening and downloading sources from GoogleScholar can be cumbersome and not very user-friendly. To simplify this, we used [Harzing's \(2016\) Publish or Perish](#) approach we conducted the same search within the software that we would normally perform directly on Google Scholar. While only a limited number of results were initially retrieved, the tool allows for efficient screening. Once screened, the results were exported in a Zotero-compatible format and uploaded to Zotero.

Lastly, we did not have a subscription to an academic database platform. Instead, we worked through partner institutions, limiting our direct access and interface with academic repositories. Having direct access would have allowed a more effective use of search strings, filters, subject headings, and tracking of search progress, enabling real-time refinements.

Sourcing unpublished evidence presented significant practical challenges, particularly when seeking offline research or non-research materials. Locating paper-based evidence is time-consuming and often requires someone on the ground to visit libraries, repositories, or ministry archives and digitise relevant documents. Success was frequently dependent on established relationships—organisations and individuals were more willing to share unpublished work when trust and prior collaboration existed, whereas new acquaintances (e.g., met at conferences or events) were often reluctant to share evidence, especially if findings were politically sensitive or not as positive as expected. Indeed, donors frequently act as gatekeepers ([Madonsela et al., 2025](#)), determining what evidence producers can share.

Recommendation for future applications of LIFTED: Design search protocols that outline specific adaptations and considerations for different types of websites and databases. Consider integrating clear protocols for cybersecurity (e.g., secure browsers, malware protection, etc.) into search protocols and explore ethical AI tools to safely navigate access barriers, while ensuring compliance with licensing and research integrity standards. Formalise institutional partnerships to enhance access to major academic databases and invest early in building local partnerships and networks to access and digitise offline evidence. Establishing trust-based collaboration mechanisms can help overcome gatekeeping and contribute to more inclusive coverage of diverse evidence sources. Systematically documenting challenges and promising practices when searching and sourcing with different tools and approaches should continue.

#4. Managing large quantities of evidence

Over 11,000 sources of evidence were screened, and 387 initially included in EPPI Reviewer for coding and analysis. Managing large quantities of evidence like this requires certain considerations and practical tools. Firstly, all sources were uploaded into Zotero and systematically reviewed and cleaned. It was necessary to develop a standard approach to recording metadata in Zotero, especially for non-peer-reviewed sources. Non-peer-reviewed sources, such as standalone PDFs or generic webpages, often contain minimal embedded metadata, typically limited to a title, URL, and access date. As a result, Zotero frequently imports these items as standalone attachments or generic entries, lacking structured bibliographic information. To address this, we developed a standardised process for manually entering and editing metadata to ensure consistency across all non-peer-reviewed materials. We also embedded three distinct opportunities for de-duplication, including not only on the web interface during initial searches, but also in Zotero and again in EPPI Reviewer. Nevertheless, some sources slipped by, particularly when we included sources in multiple languages.

Moreover, sourcing, screening, and coding took time. While we enhanced the timeliness of our synthesis by continuously sourcing relevant evidence (e.g., through our phased approach), future applications of the LIFTED approach may consider integrating AI to enhance speed, and where relevant, publishing some of our insights earlier on—as works in progress—to make them available to our partners and the wider readership. Lastly, Excel reports extracted from EPPI Reviewer became unwieldy with such large quantities of data; it was often easier to access the coded evidence directly in EPPI Reviewer’s interface. This points to the importance of leaving ample time for data cleaning in EPPI Reviewer – as Excel reports can become unwieldy.

Recommendation for future applications of LIFTED: When saving sources in Zotero, bunch all related documents for a single source into one parent record (e.g., translations of the same source, executive summaries or annexes of the same source, etc.). Embed ample time for sourcing, eligibility screening and de-duplication, as well as coding, and data cleaning in EPPI Reviewer. Track time spent on different workstreams to the extent possible and consider the ethical use of AI to improve efficiency. Finally, framework-based syntheses are particularly valuable when time is short, and the demand for policy-relevant evidence is urgent, as they enable focusing on the research on the priorities of the stakeholders initially consulted ([Dixon-Woods, 2011](#)). In future syntheses, we will consider publishing the analytical tool or framework being used, and that emerged from initial consultations with stakeholders. This can be presented as a work in progress, while also using it more systematically to source evidence and fill gaps, ensuring stakeholder voices are explicitly included in the analysis of evidence.

#5. Accounting for multiple outputs of a single study

When drawing on non-peer-reviewed evidence and non-research, a single study may result in multiple outputs, such as a journal article, report, policy brief, and/or position paper. While each of these may serve distinct audiences, treating them as separate pieces of evidence risks overstating the weight of particular findings or themes in the final analysis. For example, multiple derivative publications may give the impression of a broader or more robust evidence base than actually exists, potentially skewing conclusions or inflating confidence in specific interventions. To mitigate this, careful source tracking and cross-referencing are essential, ensuring that the synthesis remains faithful to the underlying body of research rather than the number of times it was repackaged.

Recommendation for future applications of LIFTED: In the Descriptive Data Codes, when tracking source metadata, include a code to indicate where a source is the ‘primary output’ of a study, and where it may be a ‘derivative’ or spinoff of an original study. This will allow reviewers to map the various outputs against one another. It can also be accounted for in the Initial Appraisal tool, where the ‘relevance’ criteria may score higher for primary outputs, and ‘derivatives’ may only be coded for any *new* insights not shared in the primary output.

5. Conclusion: LIFTED in relation to standard synthesis methods

In designing LIFTED, we drew on the strengths of established synthesis methods. Each of these has set a high bar for methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability (see, for example, [Higgins et al., 2019](#); [Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)). However, these standards were developed primarily for peer-reviewed research, often privileging experimental designs and contexts where published evidence is abundant (e.g., [Glasofer & Townsend, 2021](#)). In education, and especially in low- and middle-income or crisis-affected settings, much of the most relevant knowledge sits outside of peer-reviewed journals: in program evaluations, government reports, practitioner insights, and local research that is not widely disseminated ([Education.org, 2021](#)).

LIFTED therefore builds on the principles of systematic searching, critical appraisal, and transparent reporting while intentionally extending them to capture evidence that is locally grounded, inclusive of marginalised voices, and actionable for decision-makers. Its iterative and participatory nature shares similarities with framework-based and critical interpretive syntheses, which prioritise contextual relevance and are well-suited to addressing urgent policy questions ([Mitchell, 2025](#); [Dixon-Woods, 2011](#); [Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009](#)). **Table 1** below summarises how LIFTED compares with standard approaches, and where it introduces deliberate innovations to close the gap between evidence generation and real-world decision-making.

Table 1. How LIFTED builds on and extends standard synthesis approaches

Dimension	Standard approaches	Education.org LIFTED	Added value or innovation
Scope of evidence	Prioritise peer-reviewed, published research; non-peer-reviewed and non-research sometimes included but often down-weighted.	Intentionally includes peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed evidence, e.g., grey literature, policy documents, and practitioner insights.	Expands coverage to capture more under-represented contexts and experiences, increasing equity and relevance.
Appraisal focus	Emphasis tends to focus on study design quality, with some approaches using context and relevance criteria	Multi-stage appraisal combining purpose, relevance, context, and representation with the mixed methods appraisal tool (MMAT) for study designs.	Broadens “quality” to include contextual and equity dimensions, not just methodology.
Search strategy	Structured database searches, prioritising replicability. Grey literature less systematic.	Layered searches across academic databases, multilingual grey sources, and crowdsourcing from networks.	Reduces publication bias; brings in inaccessible or unpublished evidence from LMICs and crisis-affected contexts.

Dimension	Standard approaches	Education.org LIFTED	Added value or innovation
Analytical frameworks	Logic models and focus on population, intervention, comparison, and outcome (PICO) guide data extraction and synthesis.	Analytical framework developed with education leaders (e.g., STEP Framework) and iteratively adapted as new themes emerge from analysis of evidence.	Provides frameworks that are directly actionable for policymakers.
End-user engagement	Engagement usually limited to advisory boards or post-synthesis dissemination.	Continuous co-creation with policymakers, NGOs, and donors from scoping to validation.	Ensures outputs meet real policy needs and facilitate uptake.
Outputs	Reports and journal articles, evidence gap maps, tables with “Summary of Findings.”	Diverse outputs, including high-level guidance, technical report, full synthesis, and policy tools.	Ensures outputs are actionable and can be used for decision-making.

Taken together, this comparison shows that LIFTED is not a departure from established standards but a pragmatic extension of them. By combining the rigor of systematic approaches with deliberate inclusivity—of non-peer-reviewed evidence, local researchers, policy and practitioner insights, and marginalised learners—LIFTED responds to the realities of evidence generation in education systems where conventional methods fall short. This ensures that our syntheses remain both credible to researchers and usable for policymakers, helping to close the ‘last mile’ between evidence and decision-making.

This technical report has demonstrated both the promise and the complexity of sourcing and synthesising a wide range of evidence on accelerated education transitions. By applying the LIFTED approach, we were able to bring together diverse evidence sources to generate a more inclusive and equitable evidence base. At the same time, the synthesis has highlighted important systemic gaps, such as regional blind spots and the persistent dominance of actors from high-income countries and stable contexts in shaping knowledge. These limitations underscore that evidence syntheses in education are not merely technical exercises, but interpretive and context-dependent endeavours. Looking ahead, further strengthening collaboration with researchers, governments, and communities from LMICs and crisis-affected countries will be essential to ensure that all relevant evidence (especially non-digitised) is captured. Continued investment in innovative synthesis approaches, including by integrating low-cost artificial intelligence and other tools, can help close the knowing–doing gap. Together, this will help turn fragmented evidence into practical, context-sensitive guidance that supports governments and their partners in expanding equitable access to quality education for all marginalised learners.

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Annexes

Annex A. Full list of contributing organisations

1. Accelerating Change for Children's and Youths' Education for Systems Strengthening (ACCESS)
2. Associates for Change
3. CARE International
4. Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA)
5. Chance for Childhood
6. Community Initiative Action Group Kenya
7. CREA
8. Dalan Development Consultants
9. Data and Research in Education-Research Consortium (DARE-RC)
10. Dubai Cares
11. European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)
12. Education Cannot Wait (ECW)
13. Education Development Center
14. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
15. Education International
16. El Salvador Ministry of Education
17. Education in Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA)
18. FCDO's Girls Education Challenge (GEC)
19. Fundación Carvajal (Colombia)
20. Fundacion Escuela Nueva (Colombia)
21. Generation Unlimited
22. Geneva Global
23. Global Schools Forum
24. Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
25. IDInsight
26. International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
27. Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), Gender and Disability Inclusive Education Working Groups
28. International Rescue Committee (IRC)
29. Irish Aid
30. Jacobs Foundation
31. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
32. Kenya Ministry of Education
33. Kenya Planning Directorate
34. Luminos Fund
35. National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK)

36. Nigeria Education Policy Commission, Out-of-School Children Thematic Group
37. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)
38. Norwegian Refugee Councils (Offices in Colombia, Kenya, Lebanon, and the Global headquarters)
39. Open University
40. Pakistan Alliance for Girls (PAGE)
41. Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)
42. Pakistan MoFEPT
43. PFL Hub
44. Plan International (Global headquarters and country office)
45. Porticus
46. Rockdale Foundation
47. Save the Children (US and UK headquarters; offices in Colombia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda)
48. Sierra Leone MBSEE / NFE Directorate
49. Tangaza University, Kenya
50. SkilledUpLife
51. SOL
52. South Sudan Government
53. Stromme Foundation
54. SUMMA
55. Uganda Commissioner
56. Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)
57. UNESCO Multisectoral Office for West Africa
58. UNESCO-IBE
59. UNESCO-IIEP
60. UNFPA (Sierra Leone office)
61. UNHCR
62. UNICEF (Global headquarters, and offices in Pakistan and Sierra Leone)
63. UNICEF Innocenti Research Center
64. University of Cambridge's Research in Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre
65. USAID
66. Windle Trust (South Sudan)
67. World Bank (Eastern and Southern Africa Region, and Tanzania office)
68. Youth and Child Advocacy Network (YACAN) Sierra Leone
69. Zizi Afrique
70. Independent Consultant
71. Independent Consultant

Annex B. The STEP Framework

Image B1. Early versions of the STEP Framework as an analytical tool for coding evidence.

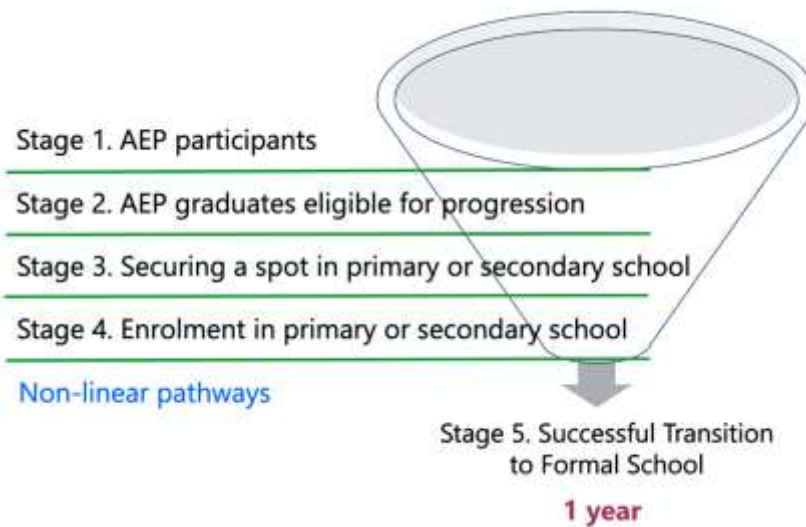
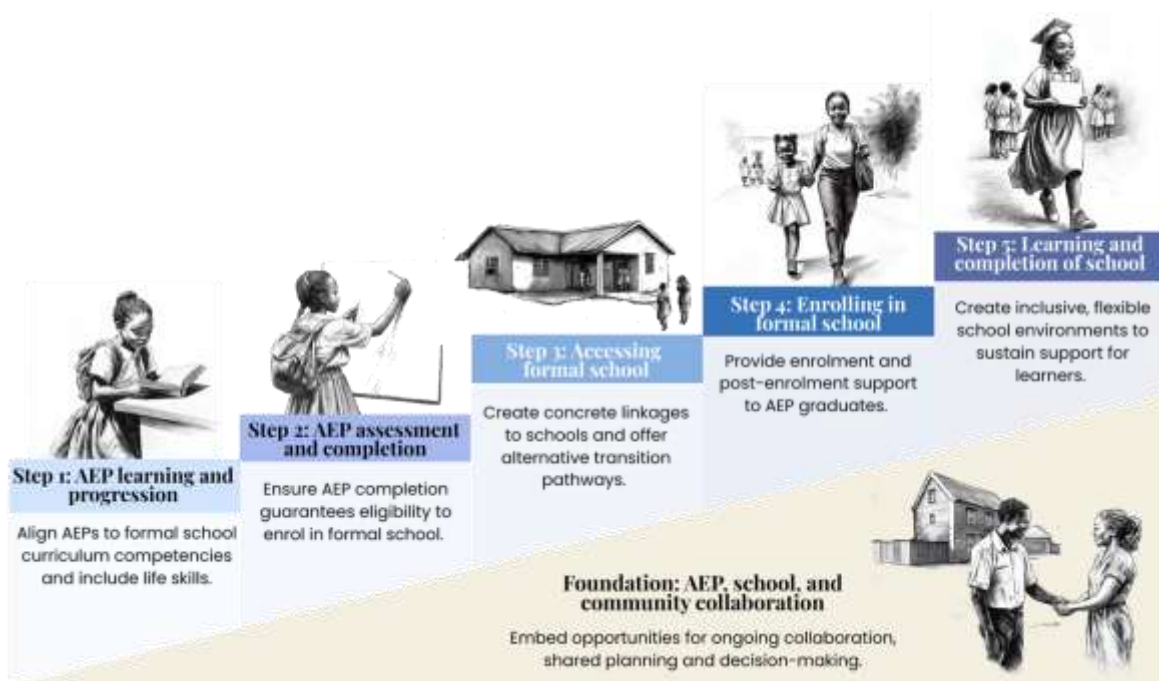


Image B2. Final version of the STEP Framework as a decision-making tool, when presenting insights captured in the evidence.



Annex C. List of sourcing platforms used

Peer-reviewed databases searched via EBSCOhost

1. Academic search ultimate
2. APA PsycINFO
3. British Education Index
4. Child Development & Adolescent Studies
5. Education Abstracts
6. Education Administration Abstracts
7. Education Source
8. ERIC
9. Medline
10. Political Science Complete
11. Teacher Reference Centre
12. Web of Science (WOS)

Websites used in search strategy for both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed sources:

1. Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA)
2. INEE
3. OECD Library
4. Relief Web
5. Save the Children
6. UNESCO
7. UNESCO-IIEP
8. UNESCO-IIEP Planipolis
9. UNICEF
10. USAID EducationLinks
11. The World Bank Open Knowledge Repository

Annex D. Search words and strings

All searches were limited from **2016 to date of search**, unless otherwise specified.

Database or platform	Search strings and keywords	Notes
African Education Research Database (AERD)	out-of-school refugee accelerated learning non-formal education alternative learning re-entry drop-out accelerated education	Database was updated only to 2022 at time of search
ESSA (Education Sub-Saharan Africa)	access AND refugee (2016 to 2024) out-of-school (2016 to 2024) alternative learning (2016 to 2024) non-formal school (2016 to 2024)	
AllAfrica.com	out-of-school education	Searcher scrolled through 10 pages and used the drop-down menu on website rather than a keyword search
Africa News	("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE) AND ("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school")	Searcher scrolled through 10 pages
African Journals online (AJOL)	((("out of school") OR (refugee)) OR (marginalised)) OR (out-of-school)) AND ("accelerated education" OR "non-formal education")	
JSTOR	(out-of-school OR OOSC OR OOSCY OR adversity OR "hardest to reach") AND ("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning")	
Open Alex	("accelerated education" AND ("out of school" OR refugee* OR marginalized OR marginalised))	
Google ENGLISH	("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal education" OR "non formal education") AND ("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE) "Brazil" + "accelerated education" + "out-of-school" burundi; save the children; AEP; out of school children cameroon, accelerated education, out of school children chad; accelerated education; out of school children djibouti, EAA, accelerated education east timor, accelerated education	

"accelerated education" "Angola"
 "accelerated education" "Cabo Verde"
 "accelerated education" "Sao Tome and Principe"
 "accelerated learning" mozambique
 "accelerated learning" angola
 Accelerated education, indonesia, out of school children
 Lao, non-formal education, out of school children
 Iran, accelerated education, EAA
 Iraq, accelerated education, OOSCY
 Myanmar, accelerated education, out of school children
 Myanmar, MC-ALP
 Vietnman, accelerated education, out of school children
 Honduras, "accelerated education"
 Honduras, educatodos
 philippines, accelerated, out of school children, USAID
 rwanda, out of school children, accelerated education
 south sudan, windle trust, out of school children, windle
 trust evaluation
 gambia, accelerated education, evaluation, out of school
 children
 Guatemala, "accelerated education"
 Peru "accelerated education"
 Mauritania "accelerated education"
 Yemen "accelerated education"
 Yemen "accelerated learning"
 allafrika.com; accelerated education programmes; out of
 school children; Uganda
 "Brazil" + "accelerated education" + "out-of-school"
 burundi; save the children; AEP; out of school children
 cameroon, accelerated education, out of school children
 chad; accelerated education; out of school children
 djibouti, EAA, accelerated education
 east timor, accelerated education
 "accelerated education" "Angola"
 "accelerated education" "Cabo Verde"
 "accelerated education" "Sao Tome and Principe"
 "accelerated learning" mozambique
 "accelerated learning" angola
 Accelerated education, indonesia, out of school children
 Lao, non-formal education, out of school children
 Iran, accelerated education, EAA
 Iraq, accelerated education, OOSCY
 Myanmar, accelerated education, out of school children
 Myanmar, MC-ALP
 Vietnman, accelerated education, out of school children
 Honduras, "accelerated education"
 Honduras, educatodos
 philippines, accelerated, out of school children, USAID

	rwanda, out of school children, accelerated education south sudan, windle trust, out of school children, windle trust evaluation gambia, accelerated education, evaluation, out of school children Guatemala, "accelerated education" Peru "accelerated education" Mauritania "accelerated education" Yemen "accelerated education" Yemen "accelerated learning"	
Google FRENCH	(adversité OR "éducation en situation d'urgence" OR marginalisés OR "enfants et jeune non scolarisés") AND ("éducation accélérée" OR "programme d'éducation accélérée" OR "programme scolaire accéléré" OR "éducation alternative" OR "programme passerelle")	
Google SPANISH	"programa de educación acelerada" "educación acelerada" Honduras, "educación acelerada" Honduras, "Bachillerato acelerado" Honduras, centro de educación para jóvenes y adultos Peru, "educación acelerada" Peru, educación básica alternative Guatemala, educación acelerada Guatemala, "proyecto Leer y Aprender" "evaluación"	
Google PORTUGUESE	"educação acelerada" brasil "educação acelerada" brasil "fora da escola" "educação acelerada" Moçambique "educação acelerada" Angola "educação acelerada" "Cabo Verde" "educação acelerada" "São Tomé e Príncipe"	
Google Scholar ENGLISH	("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginali#ed OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE OR drop#out* OR re#enrol#)	Search was run in Publish or Perish a software program designed to retrieve and analyse academic citations (Harzing, 2016)
Google Scholar FRENCH	(adversité OR "éducation Aen situation d'urgence" OR marginalisés OR "enfants et jeune non scolarisés") AND ("éducation accélérée" OR "programme d'éducation accélérée" OR "programme scolaire accéléré" OR "éducation alternative" OR "programme passerelle")	
Google Scholar SPANISH	"programa de educación acelerada" "educación acelerada"	
Google News	"non formal school" AND "out of school" After 2016 01 01 ("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school") AND ("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR	

	marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE) Africa media agency; transitions; out of school children Africanews; accelerated education; out of school children The Africa Report; accelerated education; out of school children; CAR Sahara Reporters; out of school children; MENAT region BBC News » Africa; out of school children; AEP; CNN » Africa. education girls; India; accelerated education transition; accelerated " out of school children" JICA, accelerated education, Pakistan	
EducationLinks USAID	accelerated out of school out-of-school	
EBSCOhost Platform	("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school") AND ("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE)	
Taylor & Francis Online	(All Fields '("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE) AND ("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school")') AND ("	
Planipolis (UNESCO)IIEP UNESCO	("accelerated education" OR "accelerated learning" OR "non-formal school" OR "non formal school") AND ("out of school" OR out-of-school OR OOSCY OR OOSC OR adversity OR "hardest to reach" OR marginalised OR marginalized OR refugee* OR "education in emergencies" OR EiE) (theme: education)	
UNICEF – annual reports	N/A	Searched by country and limited to LAC 2023
Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)	"accelerated education" "accelerated learning" "accelerated" "out-of-school"	
Latin America Bureau (LAB)		no search function: screened all "education" related news articles within 2016-2024 date range

Annex E. Example of crowdsourcing call for evidence

In English (May 2024)

**Education.org**
7,700 followers
11mo • 

Only three days left to submit evidence on the transition of children and youth from Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) to formal schooling or training!

We have already received excellent submissions from [CSEA Africa](#); [PACE](#); [Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies](#); [Girls' Education Challenge](#); [Plan International](#); [UNESCO Multi-sectoral Office for West Africa](#); and [Education Cannot Wait \(ECW\)](#) among many others - thank you!

Don't miss the chance to contribute to the evidence base that will support the creation of guidance for governments. While many children are completing AEPs, there is limited information on what happens next. Help ensure policies are developed that lay the path for out-of-school children and youth to return to formal schooling or training.

Get your evidence and insights in (published or unpublished) before our June 14th deadline! aep@education.org

In English (October 2024)



CALL FOR EVIDENCE

to help ensure children graduating from accelerated education transition to formal school, and stay in school

We are missing evidence on children with disabilities, the voices of youth, and long-term studies

Do you have what we're looking for?
aep@education.org



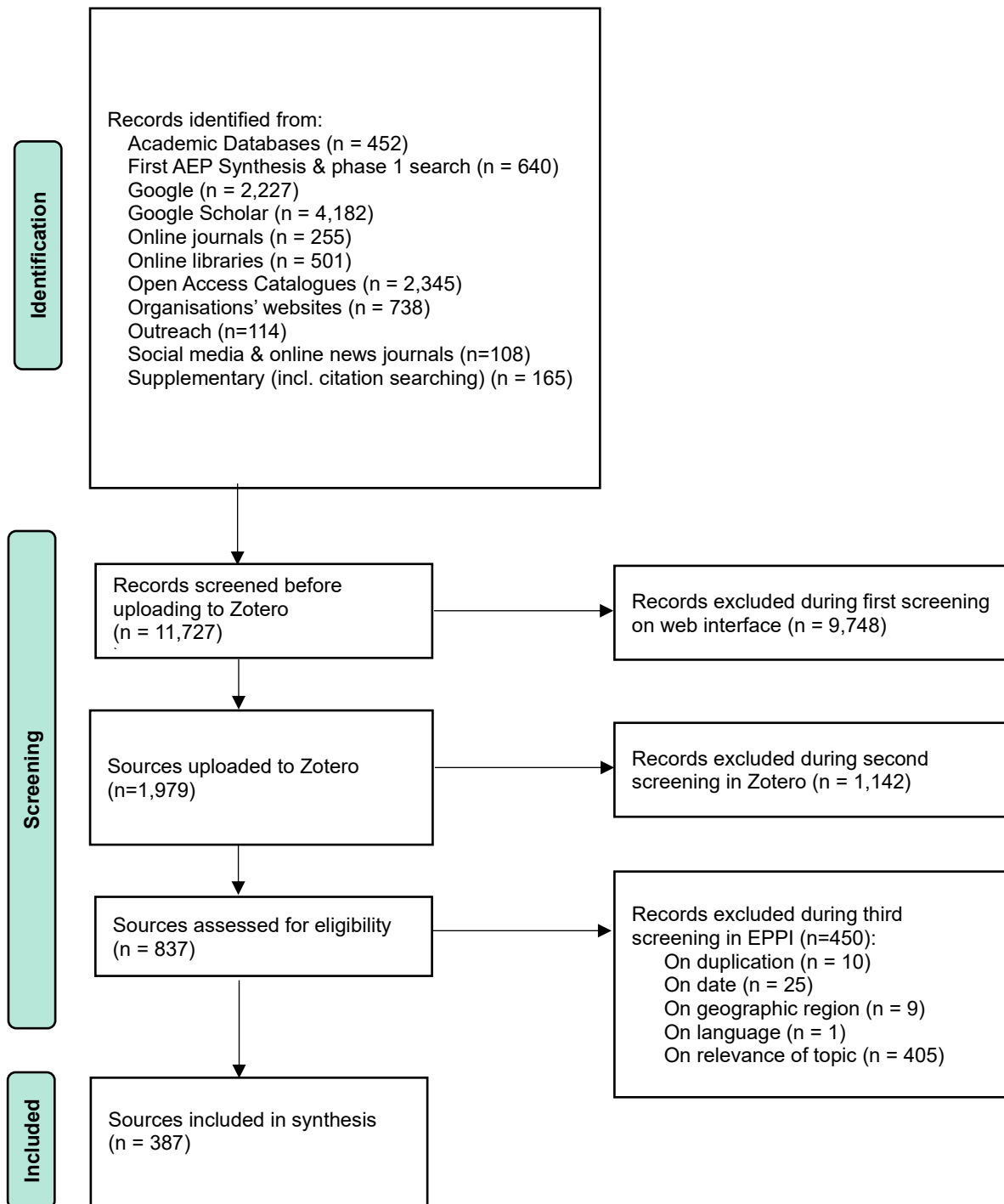
Annex F. Full list of countries included in scope of research

Countries included in the scope of our synthesis are: (1) all low- and lower-middle-income countries, especially those classified by Education Cannot Wait as crisis-affected, and (2) upper-middle and high-income countries classified by Education Cannot Wait as crisis-affected. The table below lists the 99 included countries; those in **bold letters** are crisis-affected.

Low-income	Lower-middle income		Upper-middle income
1. Afghanistan 2. Burkina Faso 3. Burundi 4. Central African Republic (CAR) 5. Chad 6. Congo, DR 7. Eritrea 8. Ethiopia 9. Gambia, The 10. Guinea-Bissau 11. Korea, DPR 12. Liberia 13. Madagascar 14. Malawi 15. Mali 16. Mozambique 17. Niger 18. Rwanda 19. Sierra Leone 20. Somalia 21. South Sudan 22. Sudan 23. Syrian Arab Republic 24. Togo 25. Uganda 26. Yemen	1. Angola 2. Bangladesh 3. Benin 4. Bhutan 5. Bolivia 6. Cabo Verde 7. Cambodia 8. Cameroon 9. Comoros 10. Congo, Rep. 11. Cote d'Ivoire 12. Djibouti 13. Egypt 14. Eswatini 15. Ghana 16. Guinea 17. Haiti 18. Honduras 19. India 20. Jordan 21. Kenya 22. Kiribati 23. Kyrgyz Republic 24. Lao PDR 25. Lebanon 26. Lesotho 27. Mauritania 28. Micronesia, Federal States 29. Morocco 30. Myanmar	31. Nepal 32. Nicaragua 33. Nigeria 34. Pakistan 35. Papua New Guinea 36. Philippines 37. Samoa 38. São Tomé and Príncipe 39. Senegal 40. Solomon Islands 41. Sri Lanka 42. Tajikistan 43. Tanzania 44. Timor-Leste 45. Tunisia 46. Uzbekistan 47. Vanuatu 48. Vietnam 49. West Bank and Gaza (or Palestine) 50. Zambia 51. Zimbabwe	1. Algeria 2. Brazil 3. Colombia 4. Dominican Republic 5. Ecuador 6. El Salvador 7. Guatemala 8. Indonesia 9. Iran 10. Iraq 11. Libya 12. Malaysia 13. Mexico 14. Namibia 15. Peru 16. Türkiye 17. Ukraine 18. Venezuela*
			High-income
			1. Chile 2. Hungary 3. Panama 4. Poland

*Venezuela was classified as an upper-middle-income country until June 2021 (FY2021), but has been unclassified since then due to the unavailability of data ([World Bank, 2024](#))

Annex G. PRISMA Chart



Annex H. Complete coding frameworks and appraisal tools

1. Descriptive Thematic Coding		
1.1 What is the source type?		
Question	Code	Description and examples
1.1.1 What type of source is this? Select ONE only. Note that this captures the source medium. This code is trying to help us distinguish whether a document is peer-reviewed or not (peer-reviewed tend to fall into three categories: journals, dissertations/theses, and books or book sections).	Book or book chapter	A report of a research study published in a book or book chapter with an ISBN
	Conference paper	A report of a study presented at a research conference and subsequently made more widely available. Peer-reviewed conference proceedings with an ISBN should still be classified as a conference paper.
	Dissertation or thesis	A report of a study in a dissertation or thesis submitted as all or part of the assessment for a higher degree.
	Journal article	A report published in a peer-reviewed journal with an ISSN or DOI
	Policy or government doc	Legislation, government press releases, education sector plans, strategies, guidance, policies, national review reports of the implementation of SDGs, etc. DOES NOT INCLUDE: Government mapping or government research/ study, which – although authored by governments – should be coded as “report” (e.g., education sector analyses). Does not include policy briefs (or policy notes) written by non-governmental actors – these should be coded as “brief.” Does not include independent assessments of strategic plans, strategies, or policies, as these are not authored by governments – these should be coded as ‘reports.’
	Report	Usually longer documents, including research reports, technical reports, programme reports, annual reports, midline or endline evaluation reports, etc. Some examples are EEF evaluation reports, annual reports, GEM reports, background papers, etc.
	Brief	Usually shorter documents, including policy briefs, thematic or topical briefs, organisational or programmatic briefs, etc.
	Website	Usually tagged in Zotero as website. Websites usually do not have an individual author specified (the author is the organization). Does NOT include blogs (see below).
	Blog	Usually tagged in Zotero as blog. Blogs usually have their own author and date of publication, as opposed to websites (see above). They also usually include a specific opinion or perspective.
	News article	Generally tagged in Zotero as Newspaper or Magazine. Usually includes a publication date. Author may be an individual or the newspaper/ media outlet itself.
	Presentation	Slide deck, PowerPoints or PDF versions of PowerPoints. Usually tagged in Zotero as presentation
	Other (please specify)	A source not classifiable according to the categories above (e.g. a video or a transcript of a video). Please add further details in the info field.

1.1.2 Does the source include AEP-specific programmatic information? Select ONE only. If YES, include name of AEP in “info” box.	Yes	The source provides information on a specific AEP or multiple AEP(s). This also includes government-run programmes, e.g. Liberia’s Alternative Learning Program (ALP) or Ghana’s Community-Based Education (CBE). This code will help us triangulate information about the same programme later.
	No	The source does NOT provide information on a specific AEP. Instead, it may refer generally to AEPs. Include the name of the AEP(s) in the “info” box.
1.1.3. Does the source include information relevant to the AEP policy mapping? Select ONE only. If YES, include why in the “info” box.	Yes (please indicate why)	The source provides information on a specific policy that promotes AEPs, and/or other relevant policy information (e.g. related to OOSCY and access), including the role of the government, the use of evidence in designing policies related to AEPs, etc. Include why in the “info” box.
	No	The source does NOT provide information on policies or the role of the government.
1.1.4 What type of research methodology is used? Select ONE only.\	Non-research	Sources that do not provide original insights based on data/evidence. Examples may include opinion pieces, a blog drawing on a teacher’s perspective, a policy framework or policy document, a programme document (even if it includes a situational analysis or consultations to inform its design), etc. Examples of non-research: GEC’s Final Reflections briefs; AEWG et al., 2022 ; MYRP programmatic docs; ACCESS research briefs
	Desk-Based	Any source that draws on existing quantitative or qualitative data, but that does NOT present original data or original analysis of data. This would include, for example, evidence reviews, policy or document analyses, or research that presents conceptual or theoretical frameworks based on existing literature. Desk-based research should have references or sources cited. They may include policy briefs that explicitly informed by background papers, literature reviews, or other desk-based research. In some cases, desk-based research may not cite sources, but may instead draw on monitoring and evaluation data (e.g., a blog that summarizes the impacts of a programme). Note if the source includes desk-based research AND primary research, you should ONLY check one of the below: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, based on the primary research. I.e. Primary research trumps desk-based research. Examples: van de Waal et al., 2024 ; INEE, 2020 ; CARE International, 2022
	Quantitative	Any source that draws on quantitative methodologies to provide primary quantitative data/evidence in its results (e.g., impact evaluations, RCTs, experimental or quasi-experimental studies, surveys or observational tools that present descriptive statistics, etc.). Note that all quantitative sources must be appraised through the MMAT tool (in the final phase of Appraisal below)

	Qualitative	Any source that draws on qualitative methodologies to provide primary qualitative data/evidence in its results (e.g., ethnographic studies, or studies using only qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, participant observations) Note that all qualitative sources must be appraised through the MMAT tool (in the final phase of Appraisal below)
	Mixed-Methods	Any source that draws on mixed methods to provide both quant and qual primary data/evidence in its results (e.g., they may present quant survey data with qual interview data). Note that all mixed methods docs must be appraised through the MMAT tool (in the final phase of Appraisal below). Examples: Oddy, 2022 ;
1.1.5 What language is the source written in? Select ONE only.	English	This code refers to the language in which the source was originally written. Only choose one language option.
	French	
	Spanish	
	Arabic	
	Other (please specify)	
1.2 Where is the information from?		
Question	Code	Description and examples
What type of organization produced or published the research? Select ALL that apply, and specify names in "info" box. Be sure to check for logos of organisations and/or funders, including licenses for journal articles.	Academic, High-income or stable country	Sources that are authored by an individual researcher or an academic institution based in (or from) a high-income or stable country, such as a university or research institute. Examples include: The REAL Centre (University of Cambridge), University of Auckland, Center for International Education (University of Massachusetts), Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Fostering Resilience Initiative (by Institute for Educational Initiatives, University of Notre Dame), etc.
	Academic, LMIC or crisis-affected context	Sources that are authored by an individual researcher or an academic institution based in (or from) an LMIC or crisis-affected context, e.g., African Research Nexus (formally known as Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Centre [DRASPAC]). Also includes independent researchers from LMICs or crisis-affected contexts. If the researcher is from an LMIC or crisis-affected context but associated with a university or institute in the high-income or stable country, it should be coded as high-income or stable country.
	For Profit, High-income or stable country	Consulting firms or organizations based in a high-income or stable country, e.g., McKinsey, Creative Associates, Associates for Change, IDinsight, TetraTech, Mott Macdonald Cambridge Education, CGA Technologies, Nordic Consulting Group A/S, Fab Inc, etc.
	For Profit, LMIC or crisis-affected context	Consulting firms or organizations based in LMICs or crisis-affected contexts, e.g., Dalan Consultants (Sierra Leone), Empatika (Indonesia), GLOW Consultants (Pakistan), etc.

	Foundation	Funders and other foundations, such as Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Jacobs Foundation, Mastercard Foundation, Echidna Giving, Dubai Cares, Luminos, Lutheran World Federation etc.
	Government	Documents from local, regional, or national governments, such as the Ministry of Education, African Union
	Bilateral	Such as USAID, UKAID/FCDO (including the Girls' Education Challenge [GEC]), IDRC, DFAT
	Multilateral	Such as UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNRWA, etc.), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Bank, OECD, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and GPE Knowledge Innovation Exchange (KIX), International Labour Office (ILO), European Union (EU), etc.
	NGO International	International NGOs, think tanks, non-profits, or research networks. For example, INEE, AEWG, The Secondary Education Working Group (SEWG), The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Contexts, Brookings, Geneva Global Hub for EiE, Global Education Cluster (GEC) (including for specific countries, e.g. Iraq Education Cluster), CARE, Save the Children, Windle Trust, Plan International, World Education, Educate a Child (EAC), BRAC, NORCAP Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Finn Church Aid, War Child Holland, VSO, Education Development Trust (EDT), Education Development Center (EDC), Education and Development Forum (UKFIET), HundrED, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Questscope, ODI, Oxfam, The Pearson Institute, Strømme Foundation, etc. Note that this includes country offices for NGO international (e.g., UNICEF Ghana or Plan Uganda).
	NGO Regional	Regional NGO, think tank, nonprofits, research networks working in multiple countries in a specific region of LMICs or crisis-affected contexts, such as SUMMA, PACE, Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA), FAWE, Center for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA), Graca Machel Trust, or RELI Africa.
	NGO National or Local	National or local NGO, CSO, think tank, nonprofit, or research network. This means that they are ONLY working in one country, e.g., Zizi Afrique.
	News/media outlet, High-income or stable country	News or media outlets based in a high-income or stable country, such as the New York Times, the Guardian, Washington Post, DevEx etc.
	News/media outlet, LMIC or crisis-affected context	News or media outlets based in LMIC or crisis-affected contexts, such as the Ghana News Agency, etc.
	Other (please specify)	A type of organization not classifiable according to the categories above. Please add further details in the info field.
1.2.2 Which regions does the source cover? SELECT UP TO 3 MAXIMUM.	Global	If source covers more than 3 regions. (Note to still select individual countries in 1.2.3, if the source includes information on programmes from these countries)

	Sub-Saharan Africa	42 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa, and Western and Central Africa.
	Middle East & North Africa	Algeria , Bahrain, Djibouti , Egypt , Iran , Iraq , Jordan , Kuwait, Lebanon , Libya , Morocco , Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria , Tunisia , United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza , Yemen
	Eastern Europe & Central Asia	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic , Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland , Romania, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey , Turkmenistan, Ukraine , Uzbekistan
	East Asia & Pacific	Including Southeast Asia: Cambodia , Indonesia , Lao PDR , Malaysia , Mongolia , Myanmar , Pacific Islands , Papua New Guinea , Philippines , Thailand , Timor Leste , Vanuatu , Vietnam
	South Asia	Afghanistan , Bangladesh , Bhutan , India , Maldives, Nepal , Pakistan , Sri Lanka . Does NOT include Southeast Asia (code as East Asia and the Pacific)
	Latin America & Caribbean	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia , Brazil , Colombia , Chile , Costa Rica, Dominican Republic , Ecuador , El Salvador , Grenada, Guatemala , Guyana, Haiti , Honduras , Jamaica, Mexico , Nicaragua , Panama , Paraguay, Peru , Sint Marteen, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela
	North America	United States, Canada, Greenland
	Western Europe	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, UK
1.2.3 Which country/countries are the focus of the source?	See full list in Annex E , which includes 99 countries recognised as sovereign states by the UN	Choose the countries that are the focus of the source. This means there is substantial information on this country. Do not code for each country that is only briefly mentioned (e.g., in a GEM report or background paper). However, if a global/regional report includes specific case studies/ deep dives on countries, include those countries. Also, if the source presents information on specific programmes, select all countries with programmes mentioned.
1.3 What is the focus of the source? Note that if the source is about more than just AEPs, code only for the AEP-specific information.		
Question	Code	Description and examples
1.3.0 Transition Map: If transitions from AEPs are mentioned, where are AEP learners	N/A	Transitions from AEPs are not mentioned.
	Unclear / "Formal School" in general	Transitions from AEPs mentioned, but it is unclear where AEP learners transition to. This includes all sources that mention "transitions to formal education" generally, but do not mention which grade level.

transitioning to? Select ALL that apply. Transitions could be mentioned as “re-entry,” “enrolment,” “re-enrolment” or “transfer”.	Formal primary education	Transitions from AEPs into primary education or elementary school, including middle school. This includes school for children of normal school-going age (depending on the jurisdiction). Pupils will typically be between age 5 and 11. If transitions to formal education are mentioned generally, check the grades/levels of the AEP, and code accordingly (e.g. if primary AEP code as primary). If transitions to “ basic education ” are mentioned, code for both primary and secondary.
	Formal secondary education	Transitions from AEPs into lower secondary, upper secondary, senior secondary or high school. This is a school for older pupils, after primary or elementary education (and after middle school where provided). Pupils will usually be between age 11 and 18. If transitions to formal education are mentioned generally, check the grades/levels of the AEP, and code accordingly (e.g. if secondary AEP code as secondary). If transitions to “ basic education ” are mentioned, code for both primary and secondary.
	Higher education	Transitions from AEPs into higher education, university, or post-secondary education that leads to a degree (whether undergraduate or graduate level)
	Non-formal education	Transitions to AEPs into another non-formal education, such as another AEP (e.g., basic or functional literacy course, adult education course, open and distance learning course, or part-time continuing education, etc.).
	Technical or vocational education and training (TVET)	Transitions from AEPs into any formal or non-formal training program that leads to certification or skills that are applied in the workforce (e.g., apprenticeship training programmes). This does NOT include entrepreneurship or apprenticeship programmes that involve earning money (see below).
	Income-generating activities	Transitions from AEPs into income-generating activities, including entrepreneurship, small business ownership, apprenticeships, or transitions directly into labour markets.
1.3.1. Does the source examine enabling/ constraining factors to post-AEP transitions? If so, at what stage(s)? Select ALL that apply. Be sure to add evidence in the “info” box. This is to understand what insights to our research questions/ conceptual framework the source can provide. Sources that	None	Enabling and constraining factors to post-AEP transitions NOT examined in source. For example, any source that mentions that the purpose of an AEP is to help learners transition to formal schooling or another pathway, without exploring WHY AEP learners do or do not transition (across Stages 1-5 or another stage), should be coded as “none.”
	Transitions to formal school generally mentioned	Enabling and constraining factors to “transitions” from AEPs to formal schooling are reported in the source, but it is unclear what stage these enabling and constraining factors belong to. Please provide details in the “info” box. Example: the EAGER project that mentioned a “transition period” where girls are provided with specific support, but it is unclear what barriers the support strategies are addressing, or a Speed School blog that describes how Self-Help Groups will allow mothers to secure the funds they need to cover future costs of children’s schooling (yet it is unclear at what stage these costs exist).

simply mention that the purpose of an AEP is to "transition" students, or that "transition" is a challenge (without exploring why), should be coded as "None."	Stage 1: AEP participation/ completion	Is an OOSCY accessing and benefiting from AEPs? Enabling and constraining factors impact OOSCY access to AEPs, the quality of AEPs (i.e. OOSCY ability to learn and benefit from AEPs), and OOSCY progression in AEPs, including attendance, dropout or retention within AEPs. Example: a policy that outlines a plan to improve access to or quality of AEPs by addressing challenges (e.g., curriculum, teacher shortages, parent awareness, etc.).
	Stage 2: AEP graduation/ certification	Is an AEP learner able to graduate and earn a certificate from the AEP? Enabling and constraining factors impact OOSCY access to AEP Certification, accreditation of the AEP course, alignment of AEP goals, and graduation (i.e. ability to sit for the final exam and ability to pass the final exam). Any source that generally mentions the importance of creating clear pathways to formal schooling, ensuring accreditation of AEPs or AEP learner certification/ readiness to transition to formal schooling should be coded as Stage 2.
	Stage 3: Securing a spot in formal school (supply-side)	Is there a school/spot available for AEP learners to transition? Enabling and constraining factors may include the availability of schools in a given community and the ability to get to that school, knowledge of which school to apply to, whether the school accepts the AEP certification, screening and selection processes that schools or governments use on AEP students, or other policies or practices that prohibit/ enable the learner in accessing the school (e.g., those banning pregnant girls), etc. If an AEP learner is repatriated or moves, his/her AEP certification may no longer be accepted at a school in the community.
	Stage 4: Enrolling in formal school (demand-side)	Does the AEP learners enrol in formal primary or secondary schools? Enabling and constraining factors may include challenges to enrolment (there is a school, but the learner may not know how to enrol, may choose not to enrol, may not have the necessary documentation to register/enrol, may not afford the cost of enrolling, etc. Also includes general reference to students "not enrolling" in school.
	Stage 5: Successful (1-year) transition to formal school	Now that the AEP learner has enrolled in formal school, what affects his/her attendance, retention, or completion of the first year? Enabling and constraining factors include anything that mention AEP learners' drop out, attendance, retention or completion of formal schooling post-AEP, including choosing to stop going/ not to go to school because of bullying or stigma, AEP learners not being able to travel long distances to school, AEP learners dropping out to work/ support their family, removal of scaffolding support that was in place during AEP but is no longer in-place in school, AEP learners not being able to afford the costs of schooling (supplies, uniforms, transportation, etc.), or mitigation factors that support AEP learners' retention in schools (e.g., "transition packs," creating inclusive school environments, etc.).

	Other formal school transitions (please specify)	Code for any other possible transition stages that the other codes may not capture and indicate in the info box. This may include, for example, longer term completion of schooling (beyond 1-year), or post-schooling outcomes such as transitions into higher education, labour markets, or general health and wellbeing outcomes later in life. Does NOT include: transitions from AEPs directly into labour markets (without completing formal schooling) – these should be coded as “alternative pathways”
	Transitions to alternative pathways	Includes sources that examine why AEP learners do or do not transition to alternative pathways (beyond formal schooling), such as into technical and vocational training (TVET), income-generating activities, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, etc.
1.3.2. Are any educational outcomes/impacts reported for AEP learners? Select ALL that apply.	Transition rates to formal schooling reported	Source has quantitative data on AEP learners transitions to formal primary or secondary schooling.
	Transition rates to alternative pathways reported	Source has quantitative data on transition rates from AEPs to alternative pathways, include technical and vocational education and training (TVET), income-generating activities (apprenticeships, internships, labour market participation), or another non-formal education pathway.
	Other AEP outcomes reported (please specify)	Source has quantitative data on other educational outcomes (beyond transition rates), including learning outcomes, social-emotional learning, attendance, completion, and/or drop out, as well as other non-educational outcomes, such as participation in labour markets, income, and/or the cost per AEP learner or cost-effectiveness of an AEP. Please specify which indicators are reported in the “info” box. Note that outcomes for <i>non</i> AEP learners should NOT be included.
	No outcomes reported	Source does not have any quantitative data to report outcomes related to AEP learners.
1.3.3 What marginalized group(s) are the focus of the source? Select ALL that apply. This focus should be notable in the title, abstract, or introduction (i.e. rationale). Do not check if only mentioned in the findings (this will be	N/A	Select N/A if the source does not focus on any specific marginalized group.
	Forced migrants	Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), or other forced migrants. Includes sources that focus on AEPs in crisis and conflict-affected settings more generally, as well as refugee camps or refugee settings specifically. These sources may also focus on host communities (but not always).
	Girls	Girls and young women
	Boys	Boys and young men

captured later in Analytical Coding). If only part of the source is focused on AEPs, assess the AEP-specific content.	Other (please specify)	Including populations experiencing extreme poverty (rural, urban informal settlement, extremely poor, food insecurity, child labour), ethnic minorities (nomadic groups, second language learners (when the language of instruction is not the mother tongue language), indigenous groups, afro-descendants, over-age learners or specific age groups (e.g., youth), LGBTQIA+, disabilities, or learning differences (According to the Oak Foundation, "the learning differences population includes students who have specific learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia) as well as individuals who may have other related neurological processing challenges that can impact learning (such as attention deficits, sensory processing disorders and executive function challenges)."
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2. Initial Appraisal	
Criteria: Description and examples	Code
2.1. Purpose:	
Is the purpose of the source clearly stated or implied, and relevant to the research topic/questions? Is the purpose of the source related to the user's analytical purpose? Does the source fit the intended lens or prescriptives needed for the use? In other words, will the source contribute to answering our RQs? Note: A source that has <i>less</i> information relevant to transitions may score lower than others. For example, a source that only has information related to Stage 1 without talking about longer-term impacts in relation to transition or post-AEP success, may score lower.	Yes – 2
	Somewhat – 1
	No – 0
	Unclear – 0
2.2. Relevance:	
Does the source address an existing problem that is relevant to our research? Is the source based on actual experiences or events? Is the information timely for the intended use? Or, on the other hand, is this source just repeating information and evidence, in the same way, as sources already reviewed? In other words, does the source contribute relevant and timely insights or evidence to our RQs, conceptual framework (Stages 1-5) or hypothesis? Note: a source that only provides 'the usual' findings or that just repackages the same evidence in a different output (e.g., an Executive Summary for a report), will likely not score as highly as others. "Relevance" is different from "Purpose" because the purpose may be aligned with our RQs and conceptual framework, but the findings and/or perspectives shared may not be as insightful or relevant. Likewise, a source that seems to have a "purpose" less aligned with our RQs, may end up providing surprisingly insightful/relevant findings or perspectives.	Yes – 2
	Somewhat – 1
	No – 0
	Unclear – 0
2.3. Context:	
Does the source address the needs, challenges, and circumstances of the educational context of use? Does the source clearly describe the context for the material (e.g., setting, affected population, educational system, socio-cultural or political context, etc.)? A more relevant, comprehensive, and rich description of the context will result in a higher score. A context that is less relevant for our geographical scope or focus on LMICs and EiE settings may score lower.	Yes – 2
	Somewhat – 1
	No – 0
	Unclear – 0
2.4. Representation of Marginalised Groups:	
Does the source represent a diversity of perspectives or include the perspectives of marginalised and/or local groups? Is the source authored by or does it include the perspective(s) of underrepresented or marginalised groups (e.g., practitioners, students, girls, students with disabilities/learning differences, youth, refugees, etc.)? If empirical research , does it include	Yes – 2
	Somewhat – 1
	No – 0

primary data collection with these groups (for example capturing perspectives via direct interviews)? If desk-based research, is literature from LMICs or crisis-affected contexts included? If non-research , is the author from an LMIC or crisis-affected context or does the source include the perspectives of those from LMICs or crisis-affected contexts? If policy or programmatic documents , were these groups consulted in the design?	Unclear – 0
2.5 Total numeric appraisal score (Include total # in “info” box).	
Add up all the scores for each criteria in the rubric for a total between 0-8 and code accordingly. Only sources that receive a score of 5 or more will be coded using the Analytical Codes. In other words, if the source scored a 0-4, it will be filtered out; STOP coding here.	#0-4
	#5-8
2.6 Source to spotlight or consider for further review?	
Code for sources that we want to look at more closely/spotlight. What would make us want to do this? (local author, type of source, recent report (i.e. hot off the press), really unique insights, different perspectives, etc.). Not the usual suspects – something innovative or that stands apart. This will mean that for those sources scoring 4 or below, we can still look back at them to see if they are adding any new insights or nuances.	Yes (please indicate why)
	No

3. Interpretive Thematic Coding		
3.1 Reported outcomes (quantitative and qualitative data)		
Instructions: Check Main Code 1.3.2, and then code accordingly. Then review the full text of the PDF to add the RANGE that the source reports (lowest-highest) quantitatively in the “info” box. Review the full text PDF one more time, to add any qualitative data related to reported outcomes. In the “info” box also include page numbers or numbers of tables/boxes with more relevant details.		
Question	Code	Description and examples
3.1.1. Is the source an evaluation? (select ONE only)	No, not an evaluation	All other sources, including non-research
	Yes	Includes all evaluations (internally or externally/independently conducted). Note that all considerations, regarding conflicts of interest or potential biases that may make shape its rigor/trustworthiness, should be addressed in the Appraisal code.
3.1.2 Impacts of AEP: What educational outcome(s) are reported (or monitored) for AEP learners? (select ALL that apply)	None	If no educational outcomes are monitored/reported
	AEP enrolment	Reach or scale of a programme; does not include attendance (see below)
	AEP attendance, retention or dropout	Also including issues of attendance or absenteeism
	AEP learning outcomes	Usually measured by exams/tests, but can also include qualitative data that points to improvements in learning or understanding. DOES NOT INCLUDE LEARNING POST-AEP; see below, “AEP graduate outcomes once in formal school (Stage 5)”
	AEP level progression or repetition	Progression or repetition through AEP levels. NOT progression/transition from AEP to formal school.
	AEP completion	Completion rates, in general – not linked to certification (see below).
	AEP certification	Usually measured by learners who passed an exam or who obtained a certificate, etc.

	Social-emotional learning (SEL) of AEP learners	Measured by assessments (e.g., ISELA) or qualitatively reported, e.g., improved confidence, resilience, self-efficacy, perseverance, or life skills such as empathy, time management, stress management, relationships, communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, etc. May also include sexual and reproductive health knowledge and skills.
	Transition from AEPs to formal school	Transitions to formal school may also be referred to as 're-entry' or 'transferring' from an AEP to formal school.
	Transition from AEPs to alternative pathway	Such as TVET, training, income generating activities, entrepreneurship or workforce
	AEP graduate outcomes once in formal school (First year in formal school)	Includes any educational outcomes for the AEP graduate once they have transitioned to formal school, e.g., learning outcomes in school, school attendance, school drop out or completion, etc.
	Long-term (post-1-year transition) outcomes for AEP learners	Includes any educational outcomes beyond AEP graduate's first year in formal school. Usually in longitudinal or tracer studies that capture e.g., progression through formal schooling, graduation or completion of formal schooling, or transitions to labour markets (after finishing school), etc.
	Other outcomes for AEP learners (please specify)	Anything not captured above
	Indicators to monitor outcomes for AEP learners, but NO results reported	If indicators are included or planned, but no results are actually reported (e.g., programme descriptions or monitoring and evaluation tools with plans to collect and report on key educational outcomes for AEP learners).
3.1.3 Do any of the outcomes reported capture differences across subgroups of students (e.g., through disaggregation or qualitative data)? If quantitative, add the RANGE in the "info" box. (select ALL that apply)	Outcomes related to other key actors reported	This may include, for example, outcomes related to teachers (self-reported or classroom observation data), parents and community members (e.g., attitudes towards girls' education or social and gender norm data), school leaders, etc.
	No disaggregation or differences captured	Only overall/general outcomes presented. Include note if datasets from different cohorts or AEPs have been merged.
	Gender disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to gender-disaggregation in info box.
	Socio-economic disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to socioeconomic status disaggregation in info box.
	Disability disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to disability disaggregation in info box.
	Age disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to age disaggregation in info box.
	Grade/AEP Level disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to grade/AEP level disaggregation in info box.
	Language / ethnicity disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to language/ethnicity disaggregation.
	Location / site disaggregation	Include quantitative data related to differences across locations or AEP/school sites.
3.1.4. Gender marker: To what extent does the	Other demographic characteristics	Include quantitative data related to disaggregation of a demographic characteristic not included above.
	Gender unintentional	The source does NOT identify/consider gendered barriers to education.

source address gender? (Select ONE only)	Gender responsive	The source identifies/considers gendered barriers to education.
	Gender intentional	The source not only identifies gendered barriers to education; it also monitors gender related outcomes and impacts, or monitors/mitigates gendered risks.
	Gender transformative	The source explores and/or offers recommendations regarding how to work with stakeholders to address the root causes of gendered barriers (e.g., gender norms, harmful cultural practices affecting girls, boys, or gender minorities, etc.)
3.1.5 Flag for potential case study or policy example	Yes (please indicate why)	Select this code if this document is about an AEP (programme or policy) that could make a good case study in the final synthesis or other knowledge translation products. We may want to choose a programme to spotlight as a case study if, for example, it has strong reported outcomes/impact, or if it has interesting outcomes reported for a specific marginalised group (e.g., girls, learners with disabilities, etc.).
	Possibly	
	No	
3.2. Mapping risks and mitigation factors to Stages 1-5		
Instructions: Refer to Main Data Code 1.3.1., where enabling and constraining factors for Stages 1-5 should already be reported in the “info” box. Use this information to map these factors across the socio-ecological framework below. Add the factors to the “info” box and be sure to identify at which Stage (1-5) that these factors are at play. Be sure to then double-check the full text PDF for any other enabling or constraining factors shaping transitions across Stages 1-5, and code accordingly.		
Question	Code	Description and examples
3.2.1 Individual and household level factors – Micro	N/A	No individual or household level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	AEP learner aspirations or motivation	Reference to AEP learner aspirations or motivation, e.g., how their desire to go to school or to pursue an alternative pathway influences transitions across stages 1-5.
	AEP learner skills or knowledge	Reference to AEP learner skills or knowledge, e.g., how their skills or knowledge impact their ability to successfully transition across stages 1-5.
	Role, attitudes and perceptions of parents and families	In what ways do the roles, attitudes or perceptions of parents and families shape AEP transitions across Stages 1-5? Includes reference to parents/families supporting (or not supporting) their child’s participation or attendance in school or AEPs, e.g., whether or not they choose to enrol their children, providing them with academic or motivational support, or not providing them support and/or pulling them out of AEPs/formal schools to work, etc.
	Economic factors	AEP learner’s financial situation and how access to money or food and other basic necessities enables/hinders their ability to transition across Stages 1-5, e.g., inability to afford school fees, school clothes or supplies, no electricity, need to work, child labour, domestic work, or income-generating activity, food insecurity, malnutrition, etc. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.

	Orphaned or single-parent households	AEP learner's household dynamics, whether living by themselves as orphaned (their parents may have passed away) or because their parents have moved away, and/or if living in a single-parent household (e.g., single mothers, etc.). May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	Household location	AEP learner's household location and how this affects their ability to transition across Stages 1-5, e.g., reference to rural or remote communities where AEP learners cannot access AEP centres or formal schools due to long distances, etc. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners. (Does NOT include ethnic groups)
	AEP learner age	Reference to AEP learner's age and how age enables/hinders their transitions across stages 1-5, e.g., students who are overage, who "consider self too old for school" or face stigma and bullying at school due to their age. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	AEP learner gender	How gender shapes AEP learners transition across stage 1-5, e.g., gender roles and gender norms, early marriage, teen pregnancy, childcare, etc. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	AEP learner ethnicity or language	Being part of a marginalized ethnic group, a nomadic, pastoralist, or herder group, indigenous groups, afro-descendant, or those speaking a non-dominant language for the region. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	AEP learner mobility, displacement or refugee status	Including reference to refugee status, access to documentation or citizenship status, family moving, IDPs, refugees, repatriation, migrants, etc. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	Disability	Including any mention of physical, cognitive or psychosocial disabilities (e.g., trauma), or other terms such as special education or special needs. May also include mitigation strategies to support these learners.
	Other (please specify)	Code for any other individual or household factors not captured above. This may include learning differences, illness of self or family members, health issues, death of a loved one, or being orphaned or separated from caregivers.
3.2.2 Community level factors – Meso	N/A	No community-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	Role, attitudes or perceptions of community level actors	In what ways do the roles, attitudes or perceptions of community level actors – e.g., religious or cultural leaders – shape AEP transitions across Stages 1-5? Includes, negative attitudes or stigma from community towards certain types of education, valuing girls' education (or not), and/or activities to raise awareness/shift community attitudes, or engage the community, e.g., through community-led clubs for literacy, numeracy, or wellbeing, microfinance groups, etc.

	Role of local NGOs, CSOs, and other (non-AEP) service providers	In what ways do other local organisations or institutes, including NGOs, CSOs, and service providers shape AEP learners transitions across Stages 1-5? This may include, for example, reference to multisectoral collaboration with health service providers or the private sector.
	Safety of the community	In what ways do community safety and security affect AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., safety risks when traveling to/ from AEPs or formal schools, safeguarding strategies to mitigate these risks, etc.
	Other (please specify)	Code for any other family- or community-level factors not captured above.
3.2.3 AEP factors – Meso	N/A	No AEP-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	AEP calendar or scheduling	How – if at all – does the timing of AEP classes affect transitions across Stages 1-5? This includes, for example, reference to flexible hours that allow OOSCY to participate in AEPs, or challenges related to night classes, clashing schedules, etc.
	AEP curriculum and TLM	How does the AEP curriculum or the AEP teaching and learning materials help facilitate or prevent transitions (Stages 1-5)? This may include alignment with the national curriculum, an age-adjusted pace for delivery of curriculum, the quality of the content/design of the curriculum or teaching and learning materials, as well as a focus on foundational skills and SEL, extra-curricular activities, or any other specific curricular subjects.
	AEP language of instruction	How does the AEP language of instruction facilitate or prevent transitions (Stages 1-5)? This may include any mention of how mother tongue improves learning or challenges in teaching mother tongue languages in diverse multilingual settings.
	AEP teacher sourcing and development	How does the recruitment and development of AEP teachers shape transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., having enough trained teachers, recruiting teachers from the community, who speak the native language of students, recruiting female teachers to support girls or teachers with disabilities to support students with disabilities, etc. This includes any reference to how teachers are trained and supported (or not). Note: this is “teacher-facing” data, rather than “student-facing” data which is included below in pedagogy and teaching and learning materials.
	AEP pedagogy	What strategies employed in the classroom help/hinder AEP learner transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., use of learner centred pedagogy, age-appropriate instruction, remedial support for struggling learners, support for large class sizes (e.g., through grouping), access to and quality of teaching and learning materials, etc. Note: this is “student-facing” data, rather than “teacher-facing” data which is included above in teacher sourcing and development.
	AEP safety and social integration	How do safety and security concerns in AEP environments and peer relationships shape transitions

		(Stages 1-5). E.g. use of corporal punishment, bullying, or gender-based violence, or mitigation strategies to address these challenges in AEPs.
	AEP infrastructure and classroom conditions	How does the physical infrastructure of AEPs shape transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., availability and location of AEP classrooms, accessibility of buildings at AEP centres, availability of WASH facilities at AEP centres, having enough classrooms, desks, chairs, etc. in AEP centres and/or the quality of infrastructure / classroom conditions.
	AEP funding and budgeting	How does funding from AEP providers, even if partial, support programme continuity and student transitions across Stages 1-5? Includes any reference to AEP donors. Note that this only includes funding from AEP providers or donors; see "school level factors" or "policy-level factors" for school-based/ government funding, respectively.
	Cost of AEPs	How the costs (or free provision) of AEPs impacts AEP student transitions (Stages 1-5). Includes reference to the invisible costs of schooling, e.g., uniforms, transportation, teaching and learning materials, etc.
	AEP data collection, monitoring, and evaluation	How does AEP-level data collection, monitoring and evaluation shape students' transitions across stages 1-5? Includes challenges and promising practices related to data collection.
	AEP governance / accountability	How do AEP governance structures shape transitions (Stages 1-5)? Includes anything related to role of AEP implementers. It does NOT include insights related to how AEP implementers work together with formal school actors (for this, see 4.3.5 below "AEL-Formal School Nexus")
	Other (please specify)	Code for any other AEP factors not captured above.
3.2.4 Formal school level factors – Meso	N/A	No formal school-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	Formal school calendar or scheduling	How – if at all – does the timing of formal school classes affect transitions across Stages 1-5? This includes, for example, reference to clashing schedules, importance of offering flexible hours, night classes, etc.
	Formal school curriculum and teaching and learning materials	How does the formal school curriculum or teaching and learning materials (TLM) help facilitate or prevent transitions (Stages 1-5)? This may include reference to the national curriculum and specific subjects that are taught (including extra-curricular activities), as well as the nature of the curriculum (flexibility, pace, etc.), and any reference to the quality or content of the TLM for the delivery of the curriculum.
	Formal school language of instruction	How does the AEP language of instruction facilitate or prevent transitions (Stages 1-5)? This may include any mention of challenges related to NOT teaching in the mother tongue language, and/or mitigation strategies at the school level (e.g., giving language tutoring or remedial support to AEP graduates in need).

	Formal school teacher sourcing and development	How does the recruitment and development of formal school teachers shape AEP learners' transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., having enough trained teachers, teacher recruitment and management, or reference to how teachers are trained and supported (or not). Note: this is "teacher-facing" data, rather than "student-facing" data which is included below in pedagogy and teaching and learning materials.
	Formal school pedagogy	What strategies employed in the formal school classroom help/hinder AEP learner transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., types of instruction used (learner centred vs. rote learning and memorisation), remedial support, access to teaching and learning materials, etc. Note: this is "student-facing" data, rather than "teacher-facing" data which is included above in teacher sourcing and development.
	Formal school safety and social integration	How does the formal school environment and peer relationships shape AEP graduates' transitions across stages 1-5? E.g., use of corporal punishment, bullying, stigma, GBV, or mitigation strategies.
	Formal school infrastructure and classroom conditions	How does the physical infrastructure of schools shape transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., availability and location of schools and classrooms, accessibility of school buildings, availability of WASH facilities at schools, having enough classrooms, desks, chairs, etc. in schools and/or the quality of infrastructure / classroom conditions.
	Formal school funding / budget	How do schools' access to financial resources shape the AEP students' transitions across stages 1-5? Includes reference to school funding, budgeting, or allocation of school funds / resources
	Cost of formal schools	How the costs (or free provision) of schools impacts AEP student transitions (Stages 1-5). Includes reference to the invisible costs of schooling, e.g., uniforms, transportation, teaching and learning materials, etc. DOES NOT include costs of entry exams to formal schools (see below 4.3.5. "AEP-Formal School Nexus").
	Formal school data collection, monitoring, and evaluation	How does school-level data collection, monitoring and evaluation shape students' transitions across stages 1-5? Includes challenges and promising practices related to data collection. Note: It does not include reference to data sharing across schools and AEP centres (see below).
	Formal school governance and accountability	How does school-level governance impact students' transitions across stages 1-5? This includes anything related to school leaders, School Management Committees, Parent-Teacher Associations, or other school-level actors, their roles, coordination and governance, as well as systems of accountability. Note: It does not include reference to partnerships/collaboration across schools and AEP centres (see below).
	Other (please specify)	Code for any other formal school factors not captured above.
	N/A	No nexus-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)

3.2.5 AEP-Formal School nexus factors – Meso	Transition period	How can stakeholders make better use of the period in which students transition from AEPs to formal schools to ensure successful transitions across stages 1-5? Includes any reference to a “transition period” or “transitional period,” “handover period,” (i.e. when the person accountable for the AEP learner changes from the AEP implementer to the formal school provider), “limbo period” (i.e. after a learner finishes an AEP but before he/she starts formal school), etc.
	Governance and collaboration across AEPs and formal schools	How does collaboration across AEP and school-level actors shape AEP learners’ transitions across stages 1-5? Includes reference to how AEP and school-level actors work together (or fail to do so), as well as reference to how AEP actors participate in formal schools, or formal school actors participate in AEP centres, e.g., reference to linkages, coordination, collaboration (or lack thereof), “transition task teams,” “transition pathway providers” etc.
	Interaction between AEP and formal school students	How do AEP students and formal school students interact or engage with one another prior to Stage 5? Are there opportunities for them to take classes together?
	AEP certification, assessment, and accreditation	How do the certification, assessment, and accreditation processes contribute to AEP learners transitions across stages 1-5? Reference to AEP certification, accreditation of AEP programmes and certificates by the MOE, ensuring equivalency of certificates, preparing students for the assessment to get a certificate, whether or not schools accept certificates, etc.
	Screening and placement of AEP students in formal schools	How do screening and placement processes shape AEP students’ transitions across stages 1-5? Includes reference to school entry exams, screening processes, placement considerations, or any reference to how schools ‘absorb’ AEP learners, e.g., by assigning “hub schools” or “transition schools” etc.
	Parallel vs. Competing systems	How are AEPs and formal school systems seen comparatively? Are they spoken of in terms of parallel or competing systems? How do AEP centres affect formal schools? Or how do formal schools affect AEPs? This includes, for example, reference to spill over effects such as how AEP teachers transition to the formal school system and influence their colleagues, etc.
	Joint funding/ financing	In what ways are AEPs and formal schools sharing costs or engaging in joint funding or financing mechanisms?
	Data sharing	In what ways are AEPs and formal schools sharing data or engaging collaboratively in the collection and analysis of data for monitoring and evaluation?
	Other (please specify)	Any other evidence relating to the AEP-formal school nexus that enable or constrain AEP learners’ transitions across stages 1-5.
3.2.6 Policy-level Factors – Macro	N/A	No policy-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	Role of national government actors	How does involvement by the national government or MoE shape AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)? This includes

		governance structures at the national level, e.g., when the government assigns a defined unit or individual to oversee AEPs, government participating in a taskforce to oversee AEPs, or anything on the national government role, and how the national government engages with other AEP actors (e.g., AEP implementers, AEP students and their families, etc.) or sectors.
	Role of subnational government actors	Same as above, but in relation to subnational level actors (including mention of district officials, local authorities, provincial governments, etc.)
	National or subnational EMIS	How does the inclusion (or exclusion) of AEP data in national or subnational EMIS, monitoring and results frameworks, departments of statistics, etc. contribute to supporting or hindering AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)?
	Allocation of government funds and resources to AEPs	How does the allocation of government funds, budget, or resources to AEP programmes, schools with AEP students, or individual AEP students contribute to supporting or hindering AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., providing hygiene packs for AEP graduates, continuing to provide transportation to AEP graduates, or government-funded cash transfer programmes for AEP students.
	AEP policies and legal frameworks	How do existing AEP policies and legal frameworks support or hinder AEP students' transitions (Stages 1-5)? This may include, for example, AEP regulations, standards, or policies that help ensure AEPs are a policy priority, standardized, and sustained.
	Broader policy architecture	How does the broader policy architecture support or hinder AEP students' transitions (Stages 1-5)? E.g., laws that prohibit pregnant girls from re-entering school, or that help/hinder refugees and undocumented students from accessing formal schools. It may also include disaster risk reduction and response policies, etc.
	Other policy-level factor	Other policy-level factor not mentioned above.
3.2.7 Larger society or global factors – Chrono	N/A	No chrono-level factors mentioned in relation to AEP transitions (stages 1-5)
	Global health concerns	How the COVID-19 pandemic, epidemics (Ebola or AIDS), or other health concerns shape AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)
	Conflict or emergencies	How war, conflict, mass displacement, or non-climate-related natural disasters (such as earthquakes, volcanoes, or tsunamis) shape AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)
	Climate change	How climate-induced natural disasters, famine, drought, flooding, fires, etc. shape AEP transitions (Stages 1-5)
	Macro economy	How broader issues related to poverty, inflation, or the economy, impact AEP transitions (Stages 1-5).
	Culture	How cultural factors such as beliefs, traditions, rites of passage, etc. Shape AEP transitions (Stages 1-5). May also be double-coded with "individual" level factors (e.g., gender).
	Other (please specify)	Code for any other larger factors that the other codes may not capture.

3.3. High-level policy insights		
Question	Code	Description and examples
3.3.1. Does the source provide insights on how to scale and sustain AEPs?	No	No evidence related to scalability, cost-effectiveness, or sustainability provided
	Scalability	The source provides insights related to scaling AEPs (include details in Info box)
	Cost-effectiveness	The source provides insights related to cost-effectiveness, costing, financing, value-for-money, etc. (include details in Info box)
	Sustainability	The source provides insights related to sustaining AEPs, e.g., sustainable financing, sustainable models of governance, institutionalising or embedding AEPs into policy architecture or formal school systems, etc. (please include details in Info box)
3.3.2. When is transitioning to formal schools the “right” pathway ?	N/A	The source does not provide relevant evidence/insights
	“Profile” of AEP learners who transition to formal school	The source provides insights related to when AEP graduates should pursue formal school (include details in “info” box)
	“Profile of AEP learners who transition to alternative pathways	The source provides insights related to when AEP graduates should pursue alternative pathways, such as income-generating activities, technical or vocational training, or another NFE pathway (include details in “info” box)
3.3.3. Any other important policy insights?	No	The source does not provide other relevant policy insights
	Yes (please specify)	Other relevant policy-related insights that go beyond the enabling/constraining factors to transitions mapped above

4. Appraisal of Credibility		
4.1. Criteria for ALL sources		
4.1.1. Limitations	Is there a section labelled “limitations”? Are any gaps or weaknesses discussed in the source? Note: a source that is transparent about their limitations or gaps should score better than a source that does NOT recognise any existing limitations or gaps. Note that this criteria is about the limitations of the methodology/ approach, NOT of the programme or intervention itself.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.1.2. Biases	Are any biases or conflicts of interests noted in the source? Note: A source that is transparent about biases or conflicts of interest and put in place measures to mitigate them, should score better than a source that does NOT recognise any existing biases or conflicts of interest.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.2. Criteria for NON-EMPIRICAL research (“Non-Research” or “Desk-Based Research”)		
Criteria 1. Author	Is an author (person or organization) listed? If no author is listed, is the source produced, issued, or sponsored by an organization, institution, or company?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0

		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Date	Is the year given for when this was written or published? (Note that month is optional). If no date is given, but you can estimate it either from references or an online search, the source should score "1."	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Transparency of source information	Does the source clearly document where the information comes? How this is done depends on the type of source. For example, blogs may draw on just one person's perspective but can include background information on their experience. Blogs, webpages, and news articles may reference observations, reports, or interviews that they draw on. Desk-based research will include references or sources identified in a bibliography, footnotes, citations, links, etc.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Transparency of description	Does the source clearly describe the interventions, programmes, or policies it references? Sources with richer and more comprehensive descriptions should receive higher scores, e.g. there may be details of goals, curricula, learning environments, etc. For desk-based research , are the processes for selection of literature, data sources, and/or analytical approaches used transparently described?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Soundness of argument	Are the findings, conclusions, proposals, insights or recommendations supported by evidence, data, or a sound argument? Are the findings or conclusions the result of an analytical process, and is there logic in the points or opinions expressed? What arguments does the author use to support the main points or recommendations? If it is a policy document , are the proposed policy actions aligned with country needs or available data?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.3. Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (ONLY for EMPIRICAL research) - Quant/Qual/Mixed		
N/A	Check this box if the source is NOT empirical research (i.e. it was appraised using the tool above)	
Research questions or objectives	Include the research questions or objectives here, to help orient yourself to the MMAT	
4.3.1. Qualitative Research		
Criteria 1. Approach	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research questions? For example, if a case study , does it give an in-depth exploration or explanation of issues intrinsic to a particular case? If an ethnography , does it describe and interpret the shared cultural behaviour of a group of individuals?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Methods	Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question? For example, if using interviews or focus groups , does it provide a description of participants' perceptions or experiences? If observations are used, does the source describe what was observed? Does the source clearly explain the form of the data (e.g., audio or video recording, reflective diaries, photos, field notes, etc.)?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Data Analysis	Are the findings adequately derived from the data? This has to do with data analysis . Does the source clearly describe how the data has	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1

	been analysed? If so, is it appropriate for the qualitative approach? For example, thematic analysis can identify themes from interviews or focus groups, content analysis may be used to analyse text, discourse analysis and narrative analysis help look for patterns in conversations and stories, and open, axial and selective coding is often associated with grounded theory, and within- and cross-case analysis is often seen in case study.	No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Findings	Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data? This has to do with the data . For example, are there quotes, images, or other raw data provided to support or justify the findings presented?	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Coherence	Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation? There should be clear links between the data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation. This includes ensuring that data is triangulated and assessing if there is a potential gap in methodological transparency.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.3.2. Quantitative Randomised Control Trials		
Criteria 1. Randomisation	Is randomisation appropriately performed? The authors should describe how the randomization schedule was generated. A simple statement such as ‘we randomly allocated’ or ‘using a randomized design’ is insufficient to judge if randomization was appropriately performed (“Unclear”). An assignment that is predictable such as using odd and even record numbers or dates is not appropriate (“No”). Randomisation is usually achieved by referring to a published list of random numbers or random assignments generated by a computer, or through ‘blocked randomisation’ ‘stratified randomisation’ or ‘minimization.’ Researchers and participants should be unaware of the assignment sequence up to the point of allocation (“Yes”).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Participant groups (Sample)	Are the participant groups comparable at baseline? This has to do with the sample. Indicators from baseline imbalance include: (1) unusually large differences between intervention group sizes; (2) a substantial excess in statistically significant differences in baseline characteristics than would be expected by chance alone; (3) imbalance in key prognostic factors (or baseline measures of outcome variables) that are unlikely to be due to chance; (4) excessive similarity in baseline characteristics that is not compatible with chance; (5) surprising absence of one or more key characteristics that would be expected to be reported.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Outcome data (Participation)	Are there complete outcome data ? This means that all the participants remained in the study, and contributed to almost all measures from baseline to endline. Sources that note a dropout, attrition, or withdrawal rate of 20% or more should receive a “No.” If this information is not provided, the source should receive an “Unclear.”	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Blindness	Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided? Outcome assessors should be unaware of who is receiving which interventions. For example, if an enumerator administering a test to a	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0

	student, knows that the study is participating in an “intervention” he/she may assume the student performs better and score them higher, ultimately spoiling the data.	Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Participant adherence	Did the participants adhere to assigned intervention? In education, a participant may not adhere to an assigned intervention (e.g., a programme) if they have a low attendance rate or change from one intervention (or programme) to another (e.g., switch schools, switch AEPs, etc.).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.3.3. Quantitative non-randomised (e.g., non-randomised controlled trials, cohort studies case-control studies, cross-sectional analytical studies)		
Criteria 1. Representative Sample	Are the participants representative of the target population? Indicators of representativeness include: clear description of the target population and of the sample (inclusion and exclusion criteria), reasons why certain eligible individuals chose not to participate, and any attempts to achieve a sample of participants that represents the target population.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Measures	Are measures appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)? In educational research, this will likely refer to the type of tool used to measure (e.g., a test or assessment such as EGRA, EGMA, ISELA, etc.). Indicators of appropriate measurements include: the variables are clearly defined and accurately measured; the measurements are justified and appropriate for answering the research question; the measurements reflect what they are supposed to measure; validated and reliability tested measures of the intervention/ exposure and outcome of interest are used, or variables are measured using ‘gold standard’.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Outcome data (Participation)	Are there complete outcome data ? This means that all the participants contributed to almost all measures from baseline to endline. Sources that note a dropout or withdrawal rate of 20% or more should receive a “No.” If this information is not provided, the source should receive an “Unclear.”	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Confounders	Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis? In educational research, confounders are variables that may inadvertently impact the outcomes of an intervention. For example, socio-economic level or parent education level may influence how much/little a student can benefit from a specific intervention/programme. Researchers should use methods to minimise confounder bias, e.g.: <i>stratification, regression, matching, standardization, and inverse probability weighting</i> .	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Intended Intervention	During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended ? Consider whether the participants were treated in a way that is consistent with the planned intervention.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0

	Since the intervention is assigned by researchers, consider whether there was a presence of contamination (e.g., the control group may be indirectly exposed to the intervention) or whether unplanned co-interventions were present in one group. For example, if the research seeks to study the impact of an AEP on learning, the student should only be attending and receiving the support from that AEP – if they receive support from a second remedial education programme, this would contaminate the data.	Unclear = 0
4.3.4. Quantitative descriptive (e.g., surveys, etc.)		
Criteria 1. Sampling Strategy	Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question? To judge this criterion, consider whether the source of sample is relevant to the target population; a clear justification of the sample frame used is provided; or the sampling procedure is adequate.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Sample Representativeness	Is the sample representative of the target population? There should be a match between the sample and target population. Indicators of representativeness include: clear description of the target population and of the sample (such as respective sizes and inclusion and exclusion criteria), reasons why certain eligible individuals chose not to participate, and any attempts to achieve a sample of participants that represents the target population.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Measurements (Methods)	Are the measurements appropriate? Indicators of appropriate measurements include: the variables are clearly defined and accurately measured, the measurements are justified and appropriate for answering the research question; the measurements reflect what they are supposed to measure; validated and reliability tested measures of the outcome of interest are used, variables are measured using ‘gold standard’, or questionnaires are pre-tested prior to data collection.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Non-Response Bias	Is the risk of nonresponse bias low? This is about whether all research participants responded to all survey questions. To judge this criterion, consider whether those that did and did not respond, have different characteristics, that may affect the data. If so, the source should score lower. If nothing on ‘nonresponse’ is reported, indicators of low nonresponse bias can be considered, e.g.: a low nonresponse rate, reasons for nonresponse (e.g., noncontacts vs. refusals), and statistical compensation for nonresponse (e.g., imputation).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Analysis	Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research questions? The statistical analyses used should be clearly stated and justified in order to judge if they are appropriate for the design and research question, and if any problems with data analysis limited the interpretation of the results.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
4.3.5. Mixed methods: Remember that for mixed methods criteria E, you are required to appraise using both the qualitative tool (4.3.1) and the appropriate quantitative tool, depending on whether the quant is randomised (4.3.2), non-randomised (4.3.3) or descriptive (4.3.4).		
Criteria 1. Rationale	Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question? The reasons for conducting a mixed methods study should be clearly explained.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0

		Unclear = 0
Criteria 2. Integration of Methods	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research questions? Look for information on how qualitative and quantitative phases, results, and data were integrated, e.g.: how data gathered by both research methods was brought together to form a complete picture, and when integration occurred (e.g., during the data collection-analysis and/or during the interpretation of qualitative and quantitative results).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 3. Interpretation and Findings	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted? This has to do with the findings. The author should draw on both quantitative and qualitative data to justify their interpretations and the findings they present.	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 4. Divergences	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed? When integrating the findings from the qualitative and quantitative components, divergences and inconsistencies (also called conflicts, contradictions, discordances, discrepancies, and dissonances) can be found. If there are divergences that the author does not report, the source should score NO (0). If the author reports divergences, but does not explain them, the source should score SOMEWHAT (1). If the author reports and explains the divergences, the source should score YES (2). If there are no divergences, the source should also score YES (2).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
Criteria 5. Quant/Qual Appraisal	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved? The quality of the qualitative and quantitative components should be individually appraised to ensure that no important threats to trustworthiness are present. To appraise this criterion, use criteria for the qualitative component (5.3.1), and the appropriate criteria for the quantitative component (5.3.2, or 5.3.3., or 5.3.4). If the quality of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches score high, the source should receive a YES (2). If only one approach (quant/qual) scores high, the source should receive a SOMEWHAT (1). If both the quant and qual approaches score low, the source should receive a NO (0).	Yes = 2
		Somewhat = 1
		No = 0
		Unclear = 0
6.4. Overall assessment of the source (for ALL sources)		
What's your overall assessment of the source?	Accept	Mostly 2s, with some 1s
	Accept with reservations	Mostly 1s, with some 2s (perhaps some 0s)
	Probably not accept	Mostly 1s, with some 0s or N/As
	Decline/reject	Mostly 0s and N/As (perhaps with some 1s)

Annex I. Repository of evidence

To access the repository of 151 coded evidence sources, use [this link](#).

Annex J. Sources per country

COUNTRY	TOTAL INCLUDED (OF 387)	SELECTED FOR DEEPER ANALYSIS (OF 151)	DID NOT PASS THROUGH INITIAL APPRAISAL (OF 236)
GHANA	51	26	25
NIGERIA	31	16	15
UGANDA	41	15	26
ETHIOPIA	40	13	27
NEPAL	17	13	4
KENYA	27	11	16
SIERRA LEONE	34	11	23
PAKISTAN	29	10	19
MALAWI	15	9	6
AFGHANISTAN	25	8	17
LIBERIA	22	8	14
SOMALIA	17	8	9
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	13	7	6
ZIMBABWE	12	7	5
SOUTH SUDAN	27	6	21
BANGLADESH	16	5	11
TANZANIA	11	5	6
EL SALVADOR	14	4	10
MALI	16	4	12
NIGER	10	4	6
BURKINA FASO	11	3	8
COLOMBIA	15	3	12
JORDAN	8	3	5
MADAGASCAR	3	3	0
CAMBODIA	7	2	5
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	6	2	4
CÔTE D'IVOIRE / IVORY COAST	3	2	1
GUINEA	3	2	1
INDIA	6	2	4
LEBANON	8	2	6
MEXICO	5	2	3
PHILIPPINES	5	2	3
SENEGAL	3	2	1
ZAMBIA	4	2	2
ANGOLA	4	1	3
BHUTAN	1	1	0

COUNTRY	TOTAL INCLUDED (OF 387)	SELECTED FOR DEEPER ANALYSIS (OF 151)	DID NOT PASS THROUGH INITIAL APPRAISAL (OF 236)
BURUNDI	2	1	1
EGYPT	1	1	0
GAMBIA, THE	1	1	0
GUINEA-BISSAU	2	1	1
INDONESIA	2	1	1
IRAQ	3	1	2
LAO (OR LAOS)	2	1	1
LIBYA	1	1	0
MALAYSIA	3	1	2
MYANMAR (BURMA)	4	1	3
PANAMA	3	1	2
PERU	3	1	2
POLAND	1	1	0
SUDAN	3	1	2
TIMOR-LESTE	1	1	0
TURKEY	4	1	4
UKRAINE	1	1	0
VIETNAM	1	1	0
BENIN	1	0	1
BRAZIL	1	0	1
CAMEROON	4	0	4
CHAD	1	0	1
CHILE	1	0	1
DJIBOUTI	1	0	1
ECUADOR	4	0	4
GUATEMALA	4	0	4
HONDURAS	2	0	2
IRAN	2	0	2
MOZAMBIQUE	1	0	1
RWANDA	1	0	1
SYRIA	3	0	3
YEMEN	4	0	4

Annex K. Frequency counts for coded socio-ecological framework factors

Code	Count
Individual and household level factors	
AEP learner gender	99
Economic factors	94
Role, attitudes, or perceptions of parents and families	78
AEP learner aspirations or motivation	55
AEP learner age	52
Household location	44
AEP learner skills or knowledge	42
AEP learner disability	38
AEP learner ethnicity or language	34
AEP learner mobility, displacement or refugee status	31
Orphaned or single parent households	17
No individual level factors	10
Other (please specify)	10
AEP learner health and/or illness	5
Community level factors	
Roles, attitudes, or perceptions of community level actors	108
Role of local NGOs, CSOs, and other (non AEP) service providers	49
Safety of the community	43
No community level factors	32
Other (please specify)	3
AEP-level factors	
AEP teacher sourcing and development	98
AEP curriculum / teaching and learning materials	90
AEP pedagogy	75
AEP infrastructure and classroom conditions	63
AEP calendar or scheduling	56
AEP safety and social inclusion	55
AEP data collection, M&E	55
AEP language of instruction	52
Costs of AEP	42
AEP funding and budgeting	38
AEP governance and accountability	26
No AEP factors	12
AEP technology	10
Other (please specify)	9

Formal school factors	
No formal school factors	55
Formal school infrastructure and classroom conditions	47
Costs of formal schools	44
Pedagogy formal school	32
Teacher sourcing and development formal school	29
Formal school safety and social integration	29
Formal school curriculum and TLM	20
Formal school language of instruction	17
Formal school governance and accountability	15
Formal school calendar or scheduling	11
Formal school data collection or M&E	7
Formal school funding and budgeting	3
AEP-formal school nexus factors	
Governance and collaboration across AEPs and formal schools	66
No Nexus factors	47
AEP certification, assessment, and accreditation	45
Screening and placement	32
Transition period	31
Parallel vs. competing systems	29
Data sharing	21
Interaction between AEP and formal school students	15
Joint funding/ financing	12
Other (please specify)	1
Government and policy-level factors	
Role of national government actors	77
AEP policies and legal frameworks	44
Role of subnational government actors	42
No policy/government factors	39
Allocation of government funds and resources to AEPs	39
Broader policy architecture	33
National or subnational EMIS	14
Societal and/or global factors	
No wider societal or global factors	50
Conflict or emergencies	48
Global health concerns	40
Culture	40
Macroeconomy	11
Climate change	10
Other (please specify)	2