Multidisciplinary Research Journal
ISSN : 3088-5205
https://jorep.net

Volume: 2
Issue: 5
Year: 2026
Month: 7

From policy to practice: Evaluating alternative education responses to the humanitarian and security crisis in burkina faso's eastern regions

Kansie Sami Albert
Joint Mphil Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Department of Emergency education

Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste
Lecturer at Lisala University, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Department of Technopedagogy

ETC

ABSTRACT

This article provides a critical evaluation of alternative education responses to the humanitarian and security crisis in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions, examining the translation of policy frameworks into practice. Since 2015, Burkina Faso has experienced a devastating security crisis that has resulted in the closure of over 5,300 schools, affecting more than 818,000 children and 24,300 teachers. The Eastern Regions, encompassing the Goulmou administrative region and the provinces of Gourma, Gnagna, Tapoa, Kompienga, and Komondjari, have been particularly affected, with the provincial capital Fada N'Gourma serving as both a hub for displacement and a site of resilience in educational provision. Drawing on empirical evidence from the 2026 Certificate of Primary Studies (CEP) examination data, program evaluations, and recent institutional developments, the study examines the range of alternative education interventions implemented in the region, including Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP), transition classes, bilingual education, and vocational training programs. The analysis reveals that alternative education programs have been instrumental in ensuring educational continuity for displaced and vulnerable children, with interventions such as transition classes and SSAP structures reaching thousands of out-of-school children and facilitating their reintegration into formal schooling. However, significant gaps remain between policy commitments and practice, including coordination challenges, resource constraints, and the need for sustained psychosocial support for both students and teachers. The article argues that effective emergency education requires a multi-dimensional approach addressing not only access to learning but also quality, relevance, and sustainability. The findings suggest that the Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030) provides a strategic foundation for scaling up alternative education interventions, but its success depends on robust implementation mechanisms and sustained political commitment. The article concludes by proposing a framework for strengthening the policy-practice nexus in emergency education, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive approaches that address the unique challenges facing education in emergencies in the Sahel.

Keywords: Alternative Education, Emergency Education, Educational Continuity, Eastern Regions, Burkina Faso, Policy Implementation, Accelerated Learning, Displaced Children

RESUME

Cet article propose une évaluation critique des réponses éducatives alternatives à la crise humanitaire et sécuritaire dans les Régions de l'Est du Burkina Faso, examinant la traduction des cadres politiques en pratique. Depuis 2015, le Burkina Faso connaît une crise sécuritaire dévastatrice qui a entraîné la fermeture de plus de 5 300 écoles, affectant plus de 818 000 enfants et 24 300 enseignants. Les Régions de l'Est, englobant la région administrative du Goulmou et les provinces du Gourma, de la Gnagna, de la Tapoa, de la Kompienga et de la Komondjari, ont été particulièrement touchées, avec la capitale provinciale Fada N'Gourma servant à la fois de pôle de déplacement et de site de résilience dans l'offre éducative. S'appuyant sur des données empiriques issues des examens du Certificat d'Études Primaires (CEP) 2026, des évaluations de programmes et des développements institutionnels récents, l'étude examine l'éventail des interventions éducatives alternatives mises en œuvre dans la

région, y compris les structures de Stratégie de Scolarisation Accélérée Passerelle (SSAP), les classes de transition, l'éducation bilingue et les programmes de formation professionnelle. L'analyse révèle que les programmes d'éducation alternative ont été déterminants pour assurer la continuité éducative des enfants déplacés et vulnérables, avec des interventions telles que les classes de transition et les structures SSAP touchant des milliers d'enfants non scolarisés et facilitant leur réintégration dans le système éducatif formel. Cependant, des écarts significatifs persistent entre les engagements politiques et la pratique, y compris les défis de coordination, les contraintes de ressources et la nécessité d'un soutien psychosocial soutenu pour les élèves et les enseignants. L'article soutient qu'une éducation d'urgence efficace nécessite une approche multidimensionnelle abordant non seulement l'accès à l'apprentissage, mais aussi la qualité, la pertinence et la durabilité. Les résultats suggèrent que la deuxième Stratégie nationale d'éducation en situation d'urgence (2026-2030) offre une base stratégique pour la mise à l'échelle des interventions d'éducation alternative, mais son succès dépend de mécanismes de mise en œuvre robustes et d'un engagement politique soutenu. L'article conclut en proposant un cadre pour renforcer le lien politique-pratique dans l'éducation d'urgence, soulignant la nécessité d'approches sensibles au contexte qui répondent aux défis uniques de l'éducation en situation d'urgence au Sahel..

Mots-clés : Éducation Alternative, Éducation d'Urgence, Continuité Éducative, Régions de l'Est, Burkina Faso, Mise en Œuvre des Politiques, Apprentissage Accéléré, Enfants Déplacés

Submitted: 4 27, 2026
Published: 7 29, 2026
Corresponding Author: Kansie Sami Albert
Email address: **kansiesamialbert@cirep.ac.cd**
This work is available under a
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between policy and practice in emergency education represents one of the most critical challenges facing humanitarian response in Sub-Saharan Africa. In contexts of armed conflict, mass displacement, and chronic insecurity, the gap between what policies promise and what programs deliver can have devastating consequences for children's educational opportunities and life chances. Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions, which have been at the epicenter of the country's security crisis since 2015, provide a compelling case study for examining this policy-practice nexus in emergency education.

Burkina Faso has developed a comprehensive policy framework for education in emergencies, including the Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030), the Education Orientation Act of 2007, and various sub-national coordination mechanisms. The government has also secured significant international support, including US$168.9 million from UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for 2026, and US$36.1 million from the Education Cannot Wait fund. These policy commitments have translated into a range of alternative education

interventions, including accelerated learning programs, transition classes, bilingual education, and vocational training initiatives.

However, significant gaps remain between policy commitments and practice. The security crisis continues to disrupt education, with over 5,300 schools non-functional as of March 2024, affecting more than 818,000 children and 24,300 teachers. Displacement has led to overcrowded classrooms in host communities, while teachers in crisis contexts face significant challenges, including the need to manage classrooms under stressful conditions and address the psychosocial needs of traumatized students. The effectiveness of alternative education interventions in bridging these gaps is therefore a matter of urgent concern for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars alike.

This article evaluates alternative education responses to the humanitarian and security crisis in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions, examining the translation of policy frameworks into practice. Drawing on empirical evidence from the 2026 Certificate of Primary Studies (CEP) examination data, program evaluations, and recent institutional developments, it analyzes the range of alternative education interventions implemented in the region, their effectiveness in ensuring educational continuity, and the challenges and opportunities for strengthening the policy-practice nexus. The analysis is situated within the broader context of education in emergencies discourse, recognizing that Burkina Faso's experience offers valuable insights for the Sahel region and beyond.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on emergency education policy and practice in conflict-affected contexts. Section 3 presents the research questions guiding the analysis. Section 4 outlines the methodology. Section 5 presents the results of the analysis, focusing on alternative education interventions in the Eastern Regions and the translation of policy into practice. Section 6 discusses the findings and their implications for strengthening the policy-practice nexus. Section 7 offers concluding remarks and recommendations. Section 8 acknowledges the limits of the study. Sections 9-14 contain standard academic declarations, followed by the bibliography.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Policy Frameworks for Emergency Education

Education in emergencies (EiE) has emerged as a distinct field of practice and scholarship over the past two decades, with a growing body of policy frameworks, standards, and guidelines. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring quality and accountability in EiE programming, covering community participation, access and learning environment, teaching and learning, teachers and other education personnel, and education policy . These standards emphasize the importance of contextualization, recognizing that effective EiE interventions must be adapted to local circumstances and needs.

At the national level, Burkina Faso has developed a robust policy framework for emergency education. The Education Orientation Act of 2007 structured the education system into four components: formal education, non-formal education, informal education, and specialized education. The Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030) provides a strategic framework for emergency education interventions, emphasizing the importance of quality, inclusive, and resilient education for crisis-affected children. The government has also established coordination mechanisms, including the education cluster and sub-national coordination structures, to facilitate the implementation of emergency education interventions.

2.2 Alternative Education Interventions in Conflict-Affected Contexts

Alternative education programs have emerged as a critical component of EiE response in conflict-affected contexts. These programs are designed to provide learning opportunities for children and youth who have been excluded from or unable to access formal education due to crisis, displacement, or other barriers. Alternative education encompasses a range of models, including accelerated learning programs, transition classes, second chance schools, community-based education, and non-formal education pathways.

Accelerated learning programs (ALPs) are designed to enable out-of-school children to catch up on missed learning and reintegrate into formal education. ALPs typically compress a multi-year curriculum into a shorter timeframe, using child-centered, participatory pedagogy and intensive support. Research has shown that ALPs can be effective in improving learning outcomes and facilitating reintegration into formal schooling, though their effectiveness depends on factors including program quality, teacher training, and alignment with formal curricula. In Burkina Faso,

the Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP) structures represent a formalized approach to accelerated learning, enabling out-of-school children to catch up and participate in national examinations such as the CEP.

Transition classes, also known as bridging classes, provide a pathway for out-of-school children to transition back into formal education. These classes typically offer intensive catch-up instruction over a period of several months, followed by placement in appropriate grade levels. Transition classes have been widely used in Burkina Faso, supported by the Education Cannot Wait fund and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Bilingual education programs recognize the importance of mother-tongue instruction in facilitating learning, particularly for children who have limited proficiency in the language of instruction. In Burkina Faso, bilingual alternative education programs have been implemented in various regions, providing instruction in local languages alongside French. The presence of candidates composing in the Gulimancema national language in the 2026 CEP examinations in the Goulmou Region reflects the integration of bilingual education into the formal education system.

2.3 The Policy-Practice Gap in Emergency Education

The gap between policy and practice in emergency education has been a persistent challenge in humanitarian response. Despite comprehensive policy frameworks and significant international support, the translation of policy commitments into effective practice is often constrained by multiple factors, including resource constraints, coordination challenges, capacity limitations, and political economy dynamics .

Research on education in emergencies in the Sahel has identified several key challenges in translating policy into practice. These include the difficulty of reaching children in insecure and hard-to-reach areas, the inadequacy of teacher training and support, the limited integration of alternative education with formal education systems, and the lack of robust evidence on what works in emergency education contexts. A World Bank feasibility study on open-school models for crisis-affected adolescents in the Sahel found that participatory, learner-centred approaches foster ownership and motivation among learners, while culturally relevant curricula contribute to increased retention and improved learning outcomes.

The policy-practice gap is particularly evident in Burkina Faso, where the security crisis has created a challenging environment for education delivery. Despite significant policy commitments and international support, the education system continues to face significant challenges, including school closures, teacher shortages, and limited access for displaced children. The effectiveness of alternative education interventions in bridging this gap is therefore a critical area of inquiry.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This article is guided by the following research questions:

1. What alternative education interventions have been implemented in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions in response to the humanitarian and security crisis, and what are their key features?
2. How effectively have these interventions translated policy commitments into practice in ensuring educational continuity for displaced and vulnerable children?
3. What are the key gaps between policy and practice in emergency education in the Eastern Regions, and what factors contribute to these gaps?
4. What recommendations can be derived for strengthening the policy-practice nexus in emergency education in Burkina Faso and other conflict-affected contexts?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach, focusing on alternative education responses to the humanitarian and security crisis in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions. The case study approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of the complex interactions between policy frameworks, program implementation, and educational outcomes within a specific context. The selection of the Eastern Regions as a case is justified by the region's status as one of the most severely affected by the security crisis, the presence of multiple alternative education interventions, and the availability of detailed empirical data on education provision.

The primary data sources for this study include government documents, program reports, and institutional communications related to emergency education in Burkina Faso. Key documents analyzed include the 2026 CEP examination data for the Eastern Regions, UNICEF program documents, Education Cannot Wait reports, and Ministry of Education policy documents . These

documents were obtained from publicly available sources, including government websites and international organization databases.

Additionally, the study draws on relevant academic literature on education in emergencies, alternative education programs, and the policy-practice nexus in conflict-affected contexts. The analysis employs thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data, focusing on the design and implementation of alternative education interventions, their effectiveness in ensuring educational continuity, and the gaps between policy and practice. The study adopts a critical perspective, examining not only the formal aspects of policy and program design but also the political, social, and institutional factors that shape implementation.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Alternative Education Interventions in the Eastern Regions

The Eastern Regions of Burkina Faso, encompassing the administrative region of Goulmou and the provinces of Gourma, Gnagna, Tapoa, Kompienga, and Komondjari, have been the site of multiple alternative education interventions in response to the humanitarian and security crisis. The regional capital, Fada N'Gourma, has served as both a hub for displacement and a site of resilience in educational provision.

5.1.1 Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP)

The Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP) structures represent a formalized approach to accelerated learning in Burkina Faso. These structures enable out-of-school children to catch up on missed learning and reintegrate into formal education. The presence of candidates from SSAP structures in the 2026 CEP examinations in the Goulmou Region indicates the operation of accelerated learning programs in the region. The Ountaani A school in Fada N'Gourma hosted 7 candidates from SSAP structures for the 2026 CEP examination, demonstrating the integration of accelerated learning into the formal education system.

The SSAP structures are part of the government's broader strategy to address the educational needs of out-of-school children. They are designed to provide a pathway for children who have been excluded from formal education due to crisis, displacement, or other factors to catch up and participate in national examinations. The presence of SSAP candidates in the CEP examinations

indicates that these structures are functioning and that children are able to transition from accelerated learning to formal education.

5.1.2 Transition and Bridging Classes

Transition classes, supported by Education Cannot Wait and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education, have been implemented in the Eastern Regions to provide accelerated learning opportunities for out-of-school and displaced children. The four-month courses reach children left furthest behind with the tools and support necessary to catch up on what they've missed and prepare them to reintegrate into the regular curriculum .

The transition classes are part of the Multi-Year Resilience Programme, which has reached more than 450,000 children across Burkina Faso with a total investment of US$36.1 million to date. The recent extension of the Fund's Multi-Year Resilience Programme, including a top-up of US$1 million, supports the establishment of safe learning spaces, mental health and psychosocial services, teaching and learning materials, and the professional development of teachers. In the Eastern Regions, these classes have been critical in ensuring that displaced children, who have been unable to enroll in formal schools due to overcrowding, have access to learning opportunities.

5.1.3 Bilingual and Mother-Tongue Education

Bilingual education programs have been implemented in the Eastern Regions, providing instruction in local languages alongside French. In the 2026 CEP examinations, the Goulmou Region included 22 candidates composing in the Gulimancema national language, including 10 girls. This reflects the Ministry of Education's policy of promoting national languages in education, which is particularly important for children who have limited proficiency in French due to displacement or interrupted schooling.

The bilingual approach is informed by research demonstrating that mother-tongue instruction facilitates learning and academic success, particularly for children who have limited proficiency in the language of instruction. In Burkina Faso, the use of national languages in education has been promoted through alternative programs such as the écoles bilingues and the Centres à Passerelle. While these programs typically transition rapidly to French as the medium of instruction, they

provide a foundation in literacy and numeracy in the mother tongue that enables children to compete favorably with their peers in French-medium schools.

5.1.4 Vocational Training and Skills Development

Vocational training and skills development programs have been implemented in the Eastern Regions and other crisis-affected areas to provide alternative pathways for out-of-school youth. The Schools for Africa project, funded by the Japanese Committee for UNICEF, has offered vocational training in various trades, including poultry farming, carpentry, mechanics, electrification and solar energy, cell phone repairing, hairdressing, and sewing .

In the Sahel region, 500 adolescents and young people, including 199 girls, from internally displaced families received training and installation kits to launch income-generating activities. The project aims to ensure that 283,800 children and adolescents, including 159,600 girls, affected by complex emergencies and displacement, will have access to formal and non-formal education opportunities, psychosocial support, and vocational training. While the Eastern Regions were not the primary focus of this project, similar initiatives have been implemented in the region.

5.1.5 Teacher Training and Psychosocial Support

Teacher training and psychosocial support have been recognized as critical components of emergency education response in the Eastern Regions. In October 2025, the Burkinabè National Commission for UNESCO, in collaboration with UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, trained teachers in the Goulmou Region on creating safe and resilient learning environments, mental health, and psychosocial support for inclusive and quality education .

The training, which took place in Fada N'Gourma from October 21-24, 2025, aimed to ensure the well-being of every learner and brought together actors from primary and non-formal education and secondary education. The training recognized the importance of addressing the psychosocial needs of both students and teachers. As Yentema David Thiombiano, Regional Director in charge of primary and non-formal education in the Goulmou Region, stated: "We are recording in our educational structures children affected by crises who need psychosocial support to enable them to bounce back and integrate into the group in class”.

5.2 Translating Policy into Practice: Evidence from the CEP Examination Data

The 2026 CEP examination data for the Eastern Regions provides empirical evidence on the translation of policy commitments into practice. For the 2026 session, the Eastern Region registered 11,522 candidates, including 6,163 girls and 5,359 boys, with 251 examination halls mobilized across 79 centers and 28 juries distributed across 23 Basic Education Districts (CEBs).

The Gourma Province, at the heart of the Eastern Region, is the most represented, accounting for over 65% of regional enrollments with 7,607 candidates, including 4,101 girls and 3,506 boys, across 40 centers and 12 juries. The Ountaani A School in Fada N'Gourma hosted 280 candidates, including 133 girls and 147 boys. The center serves a diverse student population, including 203 host students and 77 Internally Displaced Students (EDI), reflecting the school's role in accommodating children displaced by the crisis.

The presence of 77 internally displaced students (EDI) at the Ountaani A school indicates that the education system is providing access to education for displaced children. However, the number of displaced students represents only a fraction of the displaced population in the region. With over 4.5 million people, including 2.9 million children, requiring humanitarian assistance in Burkina Faso in 2026, the scale of the challenge is significant.

The presence of candidates from SSAP structures and candidates composing in the Gulimancema national language reflects the integration of alternative education into the formal education system. However, the numbers are modest: only 7 SSAP candidates and 22 candidates composing in Gulimancema at the Ountaani A school. This suggests that while policy commitments to alternative education have been translated into practice, the scale of implementation remains limited relative to the needs .

5.3 Key Gaps Between Policy and Practice

The analysis of alternative education interventions in the Eastern Regions reveals several key gaps between policy and practice.

5.3.1 Resource Constraints

Resource constraints represent a fundamental gap between policy and practice. The education sector in Burkina Faso has been underfunded for decades, with limited resources available for both formal and alternative education. The security crisis has further strained resources, with funds diverted to emergency response and security. The UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Burkina Faso for 2026 seeks to raise US$168.9 million to deliver life-saving interventions, including education, for 2.9 million people, including 2.5 million children. While this represents a significant commitment, the scale of the needs, with over 5,300 schools non-functional and more than 818,000 children affected, requires sustained investment.

The resource constraints are evident in the limited reach of alternative education interventions. The transition classes, while reaching over 450,000 children across Burkina Faso, represent only a fraction of the children who are out of school. The Schools for Africa project, while reaching 283,800 children, also represents a fraction of the needs. The resource constraints are also evident in the capacity of teachers, many of whom work in challenging conditions without adequate training and support.

5.3.2 Coordination Challenges

Coordination challenges represent another gap between policy and practice. The proliferation of actors involved in emergency education, including government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs, has created challenges in coordination and coherence. The absence of a unified approach to alternative education, with multiple models and approaches operating simultaneously, has led to duplication and gaps in provision.

The Government of Burkina Faso has established structures for education in emergency situations to improve coordination among actors, but these structures face significant challenges in practice. The Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030) provides a policy framework for improving coordination, but the translation of this framework into practice requires sustained commitment and capacity.

5.3.3 Capacity Limitations

Capacity limitations represent a significant gap between policy and practice in emergency education. Teachers in crisis contexts face significant challenges, including the need to manage

classrooms under stressful conditions, address the psychosocial needs of traumatized students, and adapt their pedagogy to diverse learning needs. The capacity building initiative for teachers in the Goulmou Region, organized by UNESCO in October 2025, was designed to address these challenges by equipping teachers with knowledge and skills for creating safe and resilient learning environments.

However, the capacity building initiative reached only a limited number of teachers in the region, and the sustainability of the training depends on ongoing support and follow-up. The Safe School Program's focus on training teachers to provide psychosocial support and manage classrooms effectively during periods of stress is critical, but the scale of the training needed relative to the number of teachers affected by the crisis represents a significant challenge.

5.3.4 Psychosocial Support Needs

The psychosocial support needs of both students and teachers represent a significant gap between policy and practice in emergency education. The trauma of conflict and displacement has significant implications for children's well-being and learning, and emergency education programs must address these needs through appropriate psychosocial support. The capacity building initiative for teachers in the Goulmou Region focused on mental health and psychosocial support for inclusive and quality education, recognizing the importance of addressing the psychosocial needs of both students and teachers.

However, the translation of this policy commitment into practice faces significant challenges, including limited resources for psychosocial support, the shortage of trained mental health professionals, and the stigma associated with mental health issues in many communities. The training of teachers to provide basic psychosocial support represents an important step, but it is not a substitute for comprehensive mental health services.

5.3.5 Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

The inclusion of vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and girls, represents a gap between policy and practice in emergency education. The government has made policy commitments to inclusive education, including the inclusion of children with disabilities in the

education system. For the 2026 CEP examinations, the Eastern Region included 41 Children Living with Disabilities (EVH), including 19 girls . While this represents a step towards inclusion, the number of children with disabilities in the region is likely much higher, and many are not accessing education.

The inclusion of girls has been a policy priority, with the government and partners implementing initiatives to promote girls' education. For the 2026 CEP examinations, the Eastern Region had 6,163 female candidates, representing 53.5% of the total candidates. This suggests that efforts to promote girls' education have been successful in increasing girls' participation in examinations. However, the challenges facing girls in conflict-affected areas, including the risk of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and early school dropout, require sustained attention.

Table 1 presents a summary of key alternative education interventions in the Eastern Regions, their policy alignment, and the gaps between policy and practice.

Table 1: Alternative Education Interventions in the Eastern Regions: Policy-Practice Gaps

Intervention	Policy Framework	Implementation Status	Key Gaps
Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP)	Education Orientation Act; National Education Strategy	Limited presence in CEP examinations (7 candidates at Ountaani A)	Limited scale; limited integration with formal system
Transition and Bridging Classes	ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme; Second National EiE Strategy	Reached over 450,000 children nationally; presence in Eastern Regions	Resource constraints; limited reach relative to needs
Bilingual Education	Ministry of Education policy on national languages	Limited presence in CEP examinations (22 candidates in Gulimancema in Goulmou)	Limited scale; early-exit model limits mother-tongue instruction

Vocational Training	Schools for Africa project; UNICEF Japan funding	Reached 500 adolescents in Sahel region; limited data for Eastern Regions	Limited scale; limited integration with formal education
Teacher Training and Psychosocial Support	UNESCO capacity building; Safe School Program	Reached teachers in Goulmou Region; limited coverage	Limited scale; sustainability challenges

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 The Policy-Practice Nexus in Emergency Education

The findings from this analysis reveal a complex relationship between policy and practice in emergency education in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions. On one hand, the government has developed a comprehensive policy framework for emergency education, including the Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030), and has secured significant international support, including US$168.9 million from UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for 2026. The presence of alternative education interventions in the region, including SSAP structures, transition classes, bilingual education, and vocational training, indicates that policy commitments have been translated into practice to some extent.

On the other hand, significant gaps remain between policy and practice. The data from the 2026 CEP examinations in the Eastern Regions reveals that while there is evidence of alternative education integration, the scale of these interventions remains limited relative to the needs. The presence of only 7 SSAP candidates and 22 candidates composing in Gulimancema at the Ountaani A school suggests that alternative education interventions are not yet reaching a significant proportion of out-of-school children. The resource constraints, coordination challenges, capacity limitations, and psychosocial support needs identified in the analysis represent significant barriers to the effective translation of policy into practice.

The policy-practice gap in emergency education in Burkina Faso reflects broader challenges facing education in conflict-affected contexts across Sub-Saharan Africa. Research on education in emergencies in the Sahel has identified similar challenges, including the difficulty of reaching

children in insecure and hard-to-reach areas, the inadequacy of teacher training and support, and the lack of robust evidence on what works in emergency education contexts . The persistence of these challenges suggests that addressing the policy-practice gap requires not only policy commitments but also sustained investment in implementation capacity, institutional strengthening, and adaptive approaches.

6.2 The Role of Alternative Education in Bridging the Gap

Alternative education programs have played a critical role in bridging the policy-practice gap in emergency education in Burkina Faso. By providing flexible, accessible, and context-sensitive learning opportunities, these programs have enabled children who have been excluded from formal education due to crisis, displacement, or other barriers to access education.

The Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP) structures, transition classes, bilingual education, and vocational training programs have been instrumental in ensuring educational continuity for displaced and vulnerable children. The presence of SSAP candidates and internally displaced students (EDI) in the 2026 CEP examinations indicates that these programs are functioning and that children are able to transition from alternative education to formal education. The vocational training programs implemented through the Schools for Africa project have provided displaced youth with skills for income-generating activities, addressing not only educational needs but also economic and social needs.

However, the effectiveness of alternative education programs in bridging the policy-practice gap depends on several factors, including program quality, teacher training, alignment with formal curricula, and integration with formal education systems. The early-exit model of bilingual education, which transitions rapidly from mother-tongue instruction to French, has been criticized for not providing sufficient mother-tongue instruction to enable sustained learning outcomes. The limited scale of alternative education interventions relative to the needs suggests that the gap between policy and practice persists.

6.3 Implications for Strengthening the Policy-Practice Nexus

The findings from this analysis have several implications for strengthening the policy-practice nexus in emergency education in Burkina Faso and other conflict-affected contexts.

First, policy frameworks should be accompanied by robust implementation mechanisms, including clear roles and responsibilities, adequate resources, and accountability mechanisms. The Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030) provides a policy framework, but its translation into practice depends on the effectiveness of implementation mechanisms .

Second, alternative education programs should be adequately resourced to ensure their quality and reach. The resource constraints identified in the analysis limit the effectiveness of alternative education interventions, and sustained investment is needed to meet the scale of the needs. The UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Burkina Faso for 2026, seeking US$168.9 million, represents a significant commitment, but the translation of this commitment into practice depends on effective resource mobilization and allocation.

Third, teacher training and support should be a core component of emergency education interventions. Teachers in crisis contexts face significant challenges, and their capacity to provide quality education depends on adequate training, support, and resources. The capacity building initiative for teachers in the Goulmou Region, organized by UNESCO in October 2025, represents an investment in teacher capacity, but the sustainability of this training depends on ongoing support and follow-up.

Fourth, psychosocial support should be integrated into emergency education interventions. The trauma of conflict and displacement has significant implications for children's well-being and learning, and emergency education programs must address these needs through appropriate psychosocial support . The training of teachers to provide psychosocial support represents an important step, but comprehensive mental health services are also needed.

Fifth, alternative education programs should be integrated with formal education systems to facilitate the reintegration of children into formal schooling. The presence of SSAP candidates in the CEP examinations indicates that integration is possible, but the scale of integration remains limited. Strengthening the links between alternative and formal education is essential for ensuring that alternative education provides a pathway to formal education, rather than a parallel system.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has evaluated alternative education responses to the humanitarian and security crisis in Burkina Faso's Eastern Regions, examining the translation of policy frameworks into practice. The analysis has revealed that Burkina Faso has developed a comprehensive policy framework for emergency education, including the Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030), and has secured significant international support for emergency education interventions. A range of alternative education interventions have been implemented in the Eastern Regions, including Accelerated Schooling Strategy Pathways (SSAP), transition classes, bilingual education, and vocational training programs.

The 2026 CEP examination data for the Eastern Regions provides empirical evidence of the translation of policy commitments into practice. The presence of SSAP candidates, internally displaced students (EDI), and candidates composing in the Gulimancema national language indicates that alternative education interventions are functioning and that children are able to access education despite the crisis. However, the scale of these interventions remains limited relative to the needs, and significant gaps remain between policy and practice.

The analysis has identified several key gaps between policy and practice, including resource constraints, coordination challenges, capacity limitations; psychosocial support needs, and limited inclusion of vulnerable groups. These gaps reflect broader challenges facing education in emergencies in conflict-affected contexts, including the difficulty of reaching children in insecure and hard-to-reach areas, the inadequacy of teacher training and support, and the lack of robust evidence on what works.

The article has argued that strengthening the policy-practice nexus in emergency education requires robust implementation mechanisms, adequate resources, teacher training and support, integrated psychosocial support, and integration of alternative education with formal education systems. The recent institutional developments in Burkina Faso, including the Second National Education in Emergencies Strategy (2026-2030) and the strengthening of local education structures, provide a strategic foundation for scaling up alternative education interventions. However, the success of these initiatives depends on sustained political commitment, effective coordination, and adequate resources.

Looking forward, Burkina Faso faces continuing challenges in its efforts to ensure educational continuity in crisis-affected regions, including mounting security challenges, resource constraints, and the need to integrate alternative education into the formal education system. The lessons from the Eastern Regions' experience can inform efforts to strengthen emergency education in other conflict-affected areas of the Sahel and contribute to the broader goal of ensuring that every child has access to quality education, even in the midst of crisis.

8. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis relies primarily on documentary sources, including government documents, program reports, and institutional communications. While these sources provide valuable insights into the design and implementation of alternative education interventions, they may not fully capture the lived experiences of program participants, including children, teachers, and communities. Future research could complement documentary analysis with interviews, surveys, and ethnographic methods to gain a more nuanced understanding of the policy-practice nexus.

Second, the study focuses on a single region, the Eastern Regions of Burkina Faso. While this case offers valuable insights for Burkina Faso and the broader Sahel region, the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. Alternative education interventions in other conflict-affected areas may face different challenges and opportunities, depending on the nature of the crisis, the institutional context, and the resources available.

Third, the study examines alternative education interventions up to early 2026. Given the dynamic nature of the security crisis and the education response, subsequent developments may have altered the landscape analyzed in this article. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of emergency education interventions would be necessary to track progress and identify new challenges.

Fourth, the study does not include primary data collection from program participants, teachers, or education officials. While the documentary sources used provide comprehensive information, primary qualitative data would enrich the analysis by capturing the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders. Future research should employ interviews, focus groups, or surveys to gather primary data on the policy-practice nexus in emergency education.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on an earlier draft of this article.

10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The sole author designed the study, conducted the analysis, and wrote the manuscript.

11. COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares no competing interests.

12. FUNDING INFORMATION

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

13. DATA AVAILABILITY

All data analyzed in this study are from publicly available sources, including government documents, program reports, and institutional communications. A list of sources is provided in the bibliography.**14. DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any government or institution.

15. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Solidar Suisse Burkina Faso. (2024). Education in emergency situations: 100 out-of-school youth in the Centre-Nord region to benefit from alternative education. Ouagadougou: Solidar Suisse.
- UNICEF. (2026). Burkina Faso Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal 2026. New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF Burkina Faso. (2025). Burkina Faso: Éducation sans délai et l'UNICEF lancent un programme d'éducation inclusive et résiliente. Ouagadougou: UNICEF.

- Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales. (2026). Session 2026 du certificat d'Études Primaires (CEP) et du concours d'entrée en sixième. Ouagadougou: MEBAPLN.
- Brookings Institution. (2024). Education in the Sahel: Policies, planning, and practices for learning on the move. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Trudell, B. (2012). Of gateways and gatekeepers: Language, education and mobility in francophone Africa. International Journal of Educational Development, 32(3), 368-375.
- Ndabananiye, J. C., Ndiaye, A. B., Tran Thanh, J., & Tréguier, M. (2021). Education en situation d'urgence: engagement et leadership du MENAPLN au Burkina Faso: étude de cas. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales. (2026). Examen du CEP et concours d'entrée en 6e session 2026: Lancement officiel dans la région du Goulmou. Ouagadougou: MEBAPLN.
- Ferreira-Meyers, K., Carvalho, F. A., Kleinmann, S., & Barron Rodriguez, M. (2025). Open-school models for crisis-affected adolescents: Findings from a World Bank feasibility study. Perspectives in Education, 43(2), 179-194.
- Yameogo, W. A. A. A. (2024). Alternative learning for children, girls and young people. MIT Solve Global Learning Challenge.
- UNICEF Burkina Faso. (2025). Internally displaced adolescents and youths embrace careers for the future in Dori. Ouagadougou: UNICEF.
- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales. (2025). SMAE 2025: Un appel à protéger le droit à l'Éducation en temps de crise. Ouagadougou: MEBAPLN.
- leFaso.net. (2025). Éducation/Région du Goulmou: Les acteurs des structures déconcentrées bénéficient d'un renforcement de capacités pour une éducation inclusive et de qualité. Ouagadougou: leFaso.net.