

Aga Khan Foundation

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Rapid Assessment of Remote and Play-based Education Materials

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to present initial design recommendations for the Learning Playkit and Back to School materials based on a rapid assessment of their current use.

Executive Summary

Our Learnings

None of the participants had interacted with the Learning Playkits, so our recommendations are mostly based on immediate impressions. In general these manuals were considered difficult to understand and complex to implement.

Our Recommendations

Learning Playkit

-
- 1 Break down content
 - 2 Group content according to levels of difficulty
 - 3 Translate to Kiswahili
 - 4 Simplify objectives
 - 5 Group content into duration and material requirements
 - 6 Pace delivery of content
 - 7 Video, audio, photo versions
 - 8 Include rewards
 - 9 Include material in booklets
 - 10 Create a child's version
 - 11 Create different versions for teachers and parents

Section one

Overview of field activities



Goal of the Rapid Assessment

ThinkPlace was invited by the Aga Khan Foundation to conduct a rapid assessment of the materials below with the aim of 1) understanding whether they are being used by their intended users, and if so, what are the successes and limitations of these materials and 2) developing recommendations to improve the design of these materials to increase their usage and relevance among their target users.

Remote Play-Based Educational Materials



What are they?

These two « **Learning Playkits** » are booklets developed during Covid-19 to encourage Learning through Play. They contain play-based learning activities for 4-8 year-olds (in blue) and 9-13 year-olds (in green) that can take place at home and in the classroom.

Target users

Teachers (primary) parents (primary) and pupils (secondary)..

Field Activities *Our Approach*

A Rapid Approach

This assessment was rapid. Out of 77 participants of the Situation Analysis with whom we conducted semi-structured and in-depth interviews, we explored the materials with 15 of them as an additional area of inquiry. We showed them the materials and gave them some minutes to look over, read, interact with the booklets before asking for their impressions. We managed to lend the Playkit booklets to one teacher and two mothers for one day to give them time to go through these materials. We interviewed them the following day.

Key Questions

Key questions that the ThinkPlace team asked about the materials include:

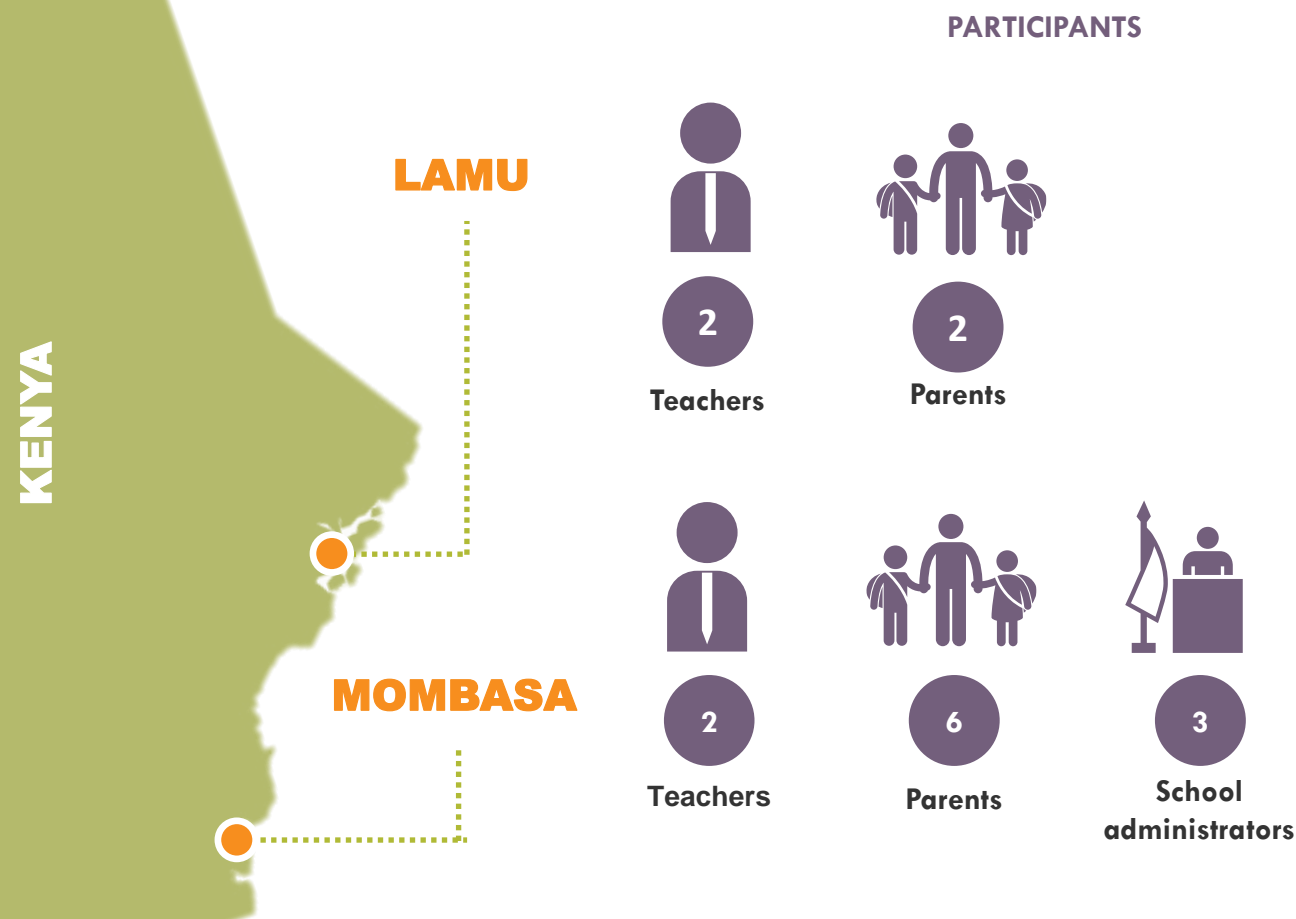
- Can you tell me what this is? Have you seen this before?
- What do you think of it? Of its content? Layout? Text?
- Have you used/would you use it? How could we make this easier for you to use? What would need to change?

Scope

Our inquiry on both Learning Playkits focused specifically on their design, without investigating the appropriateness of the content in relation to the age groups. Therefore, the general design recommendations in this report do not differentiate between both Learning Playkits.

Field Activities *Sampling and Sites*

Where and with whom the Rapid Assessment was conducted.



We conducted the Rapid Assessment with a subsample of participants from the Situation Analysis.

Limitations

The execution of this Rapid Assessment was subject to two main limitations, which were at risk of altering the quality and scope of the findings. Here, we highlight these limitations and explain how ThinkPlace mitigated their risks to the project.

NO REPRESENTATION OF PUPILS

Pupils are secondary target users of the Learning Playkit and as such it is important to understand their impressions of this material. However, we did not manage to explore the materials with them due to limited time. We prioritised grasping their more general perceptions of Learning through Play and by the time we finished our group activities with them in the context of the Situation Analysis they had to go back to class.

MITIGATION

- We elicited teachers' opinions on how the Learning Playkit could be made more exciting for the pupils. While it is not ideal to ask information from indirect sources, this does provide hints on what could be done to produce more user-friendly Learning Playkits from the pupils' perspectives.

Section two

Participant profiles

English is funny: |
lead and lead rhyme but read
and lead, and read and leaf
don't rhyme

Teacher Profiles

In the Situation Analysis we identified four types of teacher profiles that have different attitudes, behaviours and needs regarding Play-Based Learning (PBL).

 <h2>THE EMBRACER</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I'm convinced of the value of play-based learning. It's great for pupil's motivation, retention and broadened skill-set.</p> <p>It's more work for me as a teacher, but I enjoy learning these new skills and supporting other teachers in using it.</p> <p>I'm always seeking ways to get inspired and new tools to adopt PBL.</p>	<p><i>Communicating with me</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I don't need to be convinced, I need to be supported 2. Provide me with tools and tips on PLB 3. Connect me with other embracers to share 4. Support me in advocating to the sceptics
 <h2>THE SCEPTIC</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I believe in the value of traditional teaching methods that are strict, structured and heavily rely on writing and homework. Playing is futile, learning through play is inefficient and distracts pupils from studying well.</p> <p>As a teacher I need to make pupils perform and behave well, that's what parents expect of me.</p>	<p><i>Communicating with me</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I need to perceive LtP as a valuable and efficient way to reach my goals 2. I need to differentiate PBL from "bad", futile idleness 3. I like to be recognised as a high performing teacher in my school
 <h2>THE INCONSISTENT</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I'm familiar with PBL and understand its value for pupils' creativity, autonomy and motivation. I tell you that I apply it in my teaching methods, especially as I implement the CBC in my classes.</p> <p>Yet, without realising it, I haven't changed my methods much and in practice, my teaching style remains quite traditional and teacher-centred.</p>	<p><i>Communicating with me</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide my to understand what PBL really looks & feels like 2. I won't seek information since I think I already know 3. Connect me with people who will bring me new tools 4. Provide me with ready-to-use tools
 <h2>THE INSECURE</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I'm convinced of the value of PBL and would love to implement it in my classes. Yet, I'm unable to take action because I never received training on these methods. Using the CBC is stressful and challenging, I know I don't have the proper skills and resources to do it well. So I resort to familiar methods but would like to feel more empowered.</p>	<p><i>Communicating with me</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I will seek information on PBL if it's easily accessible 2. Show me that PBL is not a daunting, complex change to adopt 3. Provide me with confidence-building messages and tips 4. Show me how to take it step-by-step

Parent Profiles

In the Situation Analysis we identified four types of parent profiles that have different attitudes, behaviours and needs regarding play-based learning (PBL).

 <h2>THE INVOLVED</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I prioritise my child's education in words and facts. I'm always present at school meetings and consistently review my child's homework and progress.</p> <p>PBL is wonderful, it creates trust and friendly relationships between my children and teachers, and with me.</p> <p>I help my child learn and have been using games when I hear about them.</p>	<p>Communicating with me</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I don't need to be convinced, I need to be supported 2. Provide me with tools and tips on PLB at home 3. Help me create a routine for using PBL at home 4. Connect me with other involved parents and teachers for further support
 <h2>THE STRUGGLING</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>I really want my children to have the education I haven't been able to have. I find PBL valuable because I believe it can make my children more resilient in life and I've heard that it motivated them to learn.</p> <p>But I have virtually no time to spend with my children at home, I work all day and can only ensure they have food and shelter and that they go to school.</p>	<p>Communicating with me</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach me where I am (not at school) to communicate 2. Give me small, easily understandable pieces of information at a time where I can cognitively take them in 3. Show me how PBL can easily be integrated within my routine without too much extra effort
 <h2>THE DISENGAGED</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>My children's learning and moral education is done at school. I'm here to ensure they can go there, but it's not my role to teach my child. I don't care about the type of methods teachers use, I just want to make sure my child is in a safe place.</p> <p>I don't teach or play with my child. At home s/he does her homework and house chores, that's the norm.</p>	<p>Communicating with me</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I believe that information about teaching methods is for teachers, not for me 2. Show me why PBL is not for rich parents who can spend time with their children 3. I'm confused about homework that's not writing. Explain to me why it's valuable
 <h2>THE CONSERVATIVE</h2> <p>About Me</p> <p>A child's education is the only way s/he'll get a job that sustains them and me in the future. School is for learning good behaviours, it has to be strict, formal and intensive and lead to certificates. Learning is about reading, writing and a lot of homework, that's how one performs and stays out of bad influences. Playing is a waste of time and shouldn't be taught at school.</p>	<p>Communicating with me</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmation bias will usually make me reject arguments in favour of PBL 2. Reassure me about the link between PBL and school performance 3. Use words that aren't linked to idleness and waste of time 4. Make PBL easy for me to use

Section three

Feedback from Participants



Contextual Considerations

None of the participants had seen the materials before the interviews. Despite the fact that the materials had been sent beforehand to administrators and teachers, either online (WhatsApp, email) or physically (i.e. printed version), no one had read them. Even when we arranged to give some participants a few days to read over the material in order to delve into it in more detail during a telephone interview, none of them had had “time” to read or look over it by the agreed date of the telephone interview.

This occurrence is in itself a lesson, as it shows that for participants, the prospect of interacting with the material seemed burdensome. This suggests that it does not take into account participants’ capabilities, needs and concerns. It is important for the material to do so in order to facilitate its uptake by different participants. Below is a summary of participants’ contextual considerations.



School administrator

Capabilities	Needs	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English language - Kiswahili language - Dealing with bureaucracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To delegate tasks - To digest information quickly to inform decision-making - To make decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective communication with different stakeholders (parents, teachers, pupils, government etc.) - Time - Resources
Capabilities	Needs	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English & Kiswahili language - Multitasking (lesson planning, delivery, assessment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To cover the syllabus - Ensure pupils are learning - To quickly gauge whether an activity is a worthwhile learning experience for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective communication with parents and pupils - Complete the syllabus - Time
Capabilities	Needs	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kiswahili language - English language dependent on educational level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide for family - Child to learn and “do well” in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Money - Time - Literacy level



Teacher



Parent

Immediate Reactions: Learning Playkits

Content

***"It has a lot of text, not many images"** – teacher thinking it was targeting pupils directly, Mombasa*

***"It's complicated"** – teacher, Mombasa*

The Learning Playkits were generally perceived as content-heavy and time-consuming to engage with. Participants found the text to be excessive and the pictures alone did not explain the task at hand. One teacher explained that some of the activities are complicated to put in place as they require time and materials.

Format

***"It needs to be guided"** – mother, Mombasa*

Most parents do not see themselves using the playbook at home with their children. When probed about what guidance meant, they explained they would expect the teacher to show them how to do things by telling them directly. Therefore guidance implies a direct physical interaction, rather than one mediated through paper or a screen.

Language

***"Some words are too complicated"** – mother, Mombasa*

Parents had varying fluency levels in English. Some were confident speakers and listeners, while others preferred to respond in Kiswahili. One of the mothers who was a confident speaker said that she found the vocabulary difficult and the other three mothers in the focus group agreed with her.

Usability

***"I tried one with my boys, I chose that one because it looked easy to try"** – mother who took the material home, Mombasa*

This mother felt encouraged to try an activity that she found easy to do at home because she had the materials and understood what had to be done quickly. She said she would use the Playkit on weekends with her children. She also said doing an activity with her boys was good because it helped her understand what they are learning at school.

***"It's great! I'll use it with my children"** – mother, Mombasa*

This mother was a positive deviant due to her higher educational level and to the fact that, according to her, she was very involved in her children's education by trying to help with homework sent by the teacher on WhatsApp during Covid. She seemed to find the Playkit easy to navigate as she liked the step by step explanations.

***"I tried to follow the pictures"** – mother, Mombasa*

This other mother was given five minutes to go through any activity of her choosing to see what she thought about it and if she understood it. At the end she was unsure of what the activity was asking to do. She was unable to comprehend by looking at the pictures alone.

Section four

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit



Design Principles for Learning Playkit: EAST

Based on the user needs discussed, feedback from participants and our analysis, we recommend the Learning Playkit booklets to be redesigned following the principles in the EAST framework. According to this framework, in order for a behaviour to be encouraged, it needs to be made:



EASY

Given that teachers and parents are often overworked, tired and lack confidence to try out new activities with their pupils/children, making it easy for them is crucial to try out activities.



ATTRACTIVE

The content needs to be made attractive so that teachers and parents choose to engage with it over other competing activities. This is done by tapping into what they value most, such as standing out from the crowd.



SOCIAL

Humans are inherently social beings. We are influenced by what our peers are doing. The booklets' design can leverage on this to increase their retention among teachers, parents and pupils.



TIMELY

Humans react differently to the same piece of information depending on when they receive it. Choosing the right time to share content is crucial in influencing parents/teachers to try out learning activities with their children/pupils.

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



1. Break down the content into smaller steps

Break down each activity further into smaller steps and simplify the language by using shorter sentences, more simple words.

What does it look like

For example, the activity “Welcome to my Restaurant” can be broken down into more simple standalone activities, each presented in their own page, such as:

1. Create a Menu
2. Define the prices of the Menu
3. Get the order
4. Get the bill right

EAST rationale

Easy: Making an activity as easy as possible will increase the likelihood of a parent or teacher to perceive it as a small commitment and hence will feel encouraged to try it out with their children.

User segment

Teachers:

- The Embracer
- The Inconsistent
- The Insecure

Parents:

- The Struggling
- The Involved

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



2. Group content according to levels of difficulty

What does it look like

Order the simplified activities into incremental building blocks or levels that the pupil advances in. This increases retention. The last activity of the series can review the skills learnt in the previous ones. Below is a further elaboration of the previous example:

1. Create a Menu (learn new vocabulary) – level 1
2. Define the prices of the Menu (practice maths) – level 1
3. Get the order (pupil practices writing the order with no spelling mistakes) – level 2
4. Get the bill right (pupil practices maths) – level 2
5. Welcome to My Restaurant (role play to bring together learnings from each step) – level 3

EAST rationale

Attractive & Social: Pupils, teachers and parents can see progress if they go through each level. This translates into a rewarding learning journey and leads to increasing retention, i.e. they will continue engaging with the booklet because they see value in it. As social beings, they may be driven to complete levels by a natural sense of competition with their peers.

User segment

Teachers:

- All profiles

Parents:

- All profiles

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



3. Translate to Kiswahili

What does it look like

Translate the booklets into Kiswahili.

EAST rationale

Easy: this is a simple measure to make activities more accessible and inclusive

User segment

Teachers:
- All profiles

Parents:
- All profiles

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



4. Simplify Objectives

What does it look like

Present objectives as (measurable) concrete outcomes that parents and teachers can understand. Avoid generic and abstract phrases such as “communication and collaboration” or “develop leadership skills”. Instead use “learn new vocabulary”, “learn to spell new words”, “apply maths in real-life situations”, “improve hand-foot coordination” etc.

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EAST rationale

Attractive: if parents and teachers understand and value the objectives, they will find the activity useful and worthy of their time and energy.

User segment

Teachers:

- The Sceptic
- The Inconsistent
- The Insecure

Parents:

- The Conservative
- The Disengaged

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



5. Group activities according to duration and amount of material

What does it look like

Place the estimated duration at the top. For example a clock icon to communicate the time. The amount of material needed can be communicated by placing a scale icon at the top. Prioritise sharing the activities requiring the least time and material.

EAST rationale

Easy & Attractive: adults usually don't have time or the necessary materials. The less required the more likely they are to try an activity.

User segment

Teachers:

- The Inconsistent
- The Insecure

Parents:

- The Struggling
- The Disengaged

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



6. Pace delivery of content

What does it look like

Teachers send one activity page to parents through WhatsApp or print a page for pupils to give to parents. This can be at a regular frequency, e.g. once a day, twice a week etc.

- .
- .

EAST rationale

Easy & Timely: sharing activities in small but regular doses makes them more manageable in parents' eyes

User segment

Parents
- All profiles

Observations

- Requires more time and infrastructure to prepare.(access to smartphone / computer)
- Limited access to lower-income and digitally illiterate parents and teachers

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



7. Create video, audio and photo versions of the booklets

What does it look like

Each activity can be presented in 1 minute demonstration videoclips, or in audio instructions or through photos. All these can be shared via WhatsApp/email/Youtube etc. with teachers and parents. Teachers can send audios reading out or explaining instructions.

EAST rationale

Easy & Attractive & Timely: videos, audios and photos are bite-size, easy to share individually and are more attractive formats to follow in a context of low literacy and short attention spans.

User segment

Parents
- All profiles

Observations

- Requires more time and infrastructure to prepare. (access to smartphone / computer)
- Limited access to lower-income and digitally illiterate parents and teachers

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



8. Include Rewards

What does it look like

Teachers give pupils a tick for a completed task, and a star if everything is correct. There can be space inside the booklet specifically for the teacher to fill out. Alternatively there can be a public ranking on the wall where pupils are ranked after every activity.

EAST rationale

Attractive & Social: humans are naturally competitive. They compare themselves to their peers. Incorporating healthy competition based on effort can contribute to retention.

User segment

Teachers

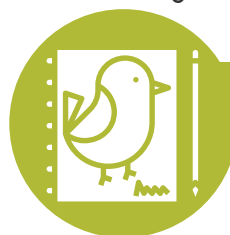
- The Sceptic

Parents

- The Conservative

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



9. Include material in the booklets

What does it look like

The booklets should include ready made material for activities, such as cutouts, drawings to colour in, templates etc.

EAST rationale

Easy: providing some of the materials reduces barriers for usage.

User segment

Teachers

- All profiles

Parents

- All profiles

Observations

However, this format requires access to other materials such as coloured crayons, scissors, glue, etc.

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



10. Create a version for children

What does it look like

A booklet directed at children that includes activities to be completed in the booklet itself. The language would be made simple, and the content broken down as suggested earlier. Children could include output of their activities in the booklet itself as a way of proving completion. For example, in the different activities involved in “Welcome to My Restaurant” they could write the menu directly onto a page provided for that purpose, they could draw a bill, etc.

EAST rationale

Attractive: According to teachers, this would be an attractive option as children enjoy colouring and drawing.

User segment

Teachers

- All profiles

Parents

- All profiles

Observations

However, this format requires access to other materials such as coloured crayons, scissors, glue etc.

Design Recommendations: Learning Playkit

Following the EAST framework, below are design recommendations for the Learning Playkit booklets.



11. Create different versions for teachers and parents

What does it look like

Learning Playkit versions for parents and teachers separately that have different contents and designs depending on what is valuable for parents and teachers. For example, the parent version could incorporate recommendation number 5 (i.e. to group activities according to duration and amount of material) given that money and time represent constraints for them. Teacher versions could include recommendation number 4 (to simplify objectives) in order for them to understand specific learning outcomes that they are expected to achieve. Consider including content that may overlap between both booklets but that may be visually presented in a different manner.

EAST rationale

Easy, Attractive, Timely: Teachers and parents have different needs and concerns (see page 13 “Contextual Considerations” for more information) that would be more specifically addressed in separate versions targeted at them.

User segment

Teachers

- All profiles

Parents

- All profiles

Observations

xxx

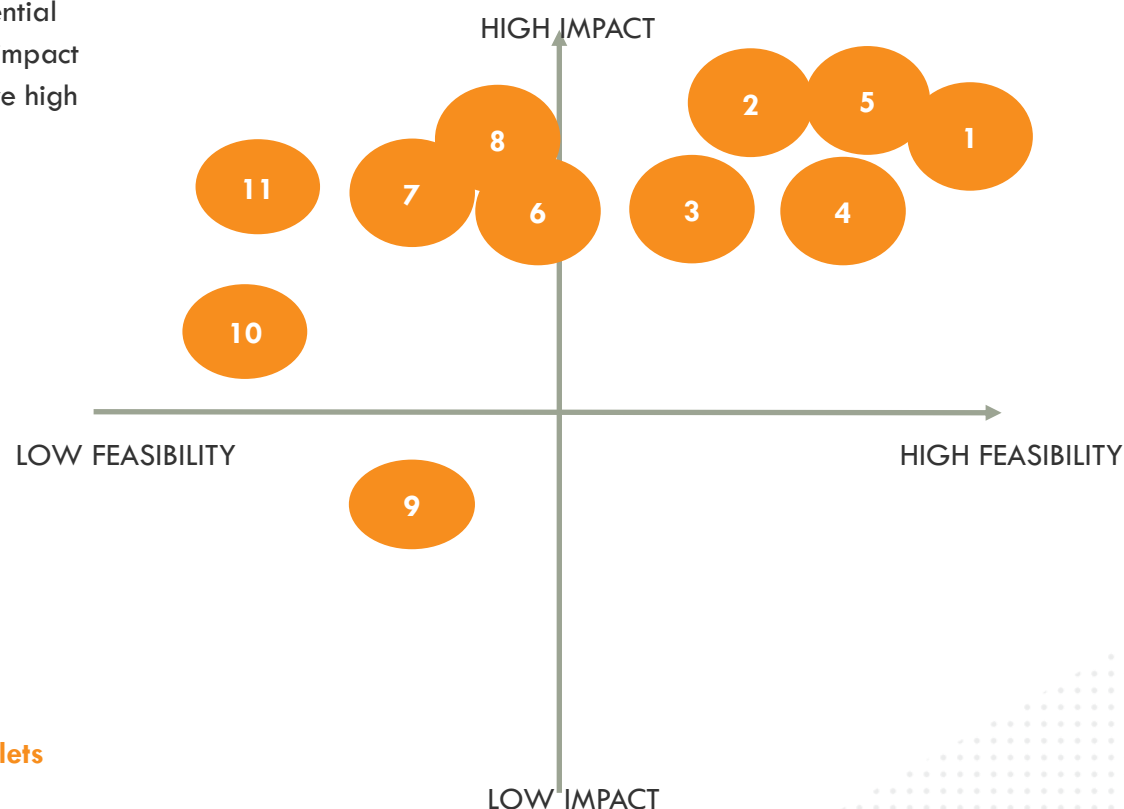
Overview of Recommendations for Learning Playkit

We have grouped our design recommendations along two axes. The horizontal axis represents what is feasible to implement according to the level of input and preparation required (time, resources etc.).

The vertical axis traces recommendations according to their potential impact. The best recommendations combine little input with high impact (top right quadrant). Interventions on the top left should also have high impact but require more preparation and infrastructure.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Break down content | 6 Pace delivery of content |
| 2 Group content according to levels of difficulty | 7 Video, audio, photo versions |
| 3 Translate to Kiswahili | 8 Include rewards |
| 4 Simplify objectives | 9 Include material in booklets |
| 5 Group content into duration and material requirements | 10 Create a child's version |
| | 11 Create different versions for parents and teachers |





ThinkPlace

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