



RIGHT TO PLAY
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

Insights from Rwandan Primary Teachers on Right to Play's E-learning and Certification Course

Prepared by Laterite

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laterite
DATA | RESEARCH | ANALYTICS

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Executive Summary

Right To Play and the Ministry of Education are implementing a Learning through Play E-learning and Certification programme to support play-based learning in the classroom. Play has been identified as an essential part for holistic skills development in children, but practical play pedagogy is lacking, partly because of a lack of quality training for teachers. The E-Training and Certification programme will train, certify and mentor lower primary teachers in Rwanda, first piloting a small pre-alpha cohort and then expanding to 3,343 lower primary teachers. This pilot design study is the second in a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan that included a context study and will include a deep dive study and a baseline and endline evaluation.

The goal of this pilot design study is to understand teachers' experiences and challenges with the E-learning and certification course, and School-Based Mentors' (SBMs) experiences and challenges with providing support on the course. The study plays a role in the *ideate, prototype and test* steps of the design process of the e-learning and certification platform¹. The outputs of the study should allow us to capture data that shows a positive change from the E-learning and certification project, and pathways to improve this, without any robust evidence for causality.

The data used in this study comes from four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with teachers and four Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) with SBMs. All participants are part of the “pre-alpha” cohort involved in testing the prototype version of the E-learning and certification course. FGDs collected information about teachers' experiences accessing the E-learning and certification course platform, engaging with the content, and applying their learnings in the classroom. They were structured in three sections, with a unit observation component where teachers engaged with a course unit during the session. SSIs collected information about SBMs' preparation to support with the E-learning and certification course, their experience with Communities of Practice (CoPs), and support from school leadership with the course. Data from both FGDs and SSIs was analysed by first developing a deductive codebook and then adapting it inductively based on the transcripts. Findings cannot be used to derive generalizable conclusions about primary teachers in Rwanda.

The main challenges to accessing the course have to do with connectivity, time constraints, lack of some navigation features and poor familiarity with technology. While most teachers access the course from their smartphone at home, computers are typically preferred. Connectivity is the most common challenge for smartphone access, while time constraints are most important for those who attend the course at school via computer. The main challenges with the course platform are related to internet connectivity and data, poor fit to device, poor familiarity with technology, and lack of some navigation features. The main suggestions to

¹ This is outlined in the overview of the Design Process in Section 2.

improve the platform experience have to do with better navigation features and establishing a support group to exchange best practices on technology.

Teachers found the course content engaging and insightful and were helped by the use of concrete and practical elements such as scenarios and exercises. Teachers reported a positive experience with the unit's content, praising its use of scenarios, visual elements, and exercises to foster learning. Challenging features of the unit and course had to do with the use of more difficult accents and terminology and with long paragraphs. The main suggestions for improvement involved introducing a glossary for difficult terminology, replacing text with visual elements where possible, and including as many contextualized examples as possible.

Despite very positive reports on applying Learning through Play in the classroom, challenges persist regarding inclusive games and resource-constrained classrooms. All teachers reported a positive experience with applying Learning through Play in the classroom, mentioning improvements in students' learning, retention and collaboration, and an overall better teaching experience. The main challenges on applying Learning through Play in the classroom have to do with a lack of knowledge on inclusive games, the need for support from school leadership, the lack of learning materials, overcrowded classrooms and time constraints. Overall, understanding of Learning through Play is mainly focused on the use of specific games and activities.

SBMs have some experience with online training and little experience with Learning through Play. The challenges they reported reflect what was mentioned by teachers in FGDs. SBMs do not have experience with Learning through Play, but all of them are confident they would be able to support teachers if provided with training materials. They suggested to provide specific COP guidelines, to create more free time in their schedules, and to encourage the involvement of school leadership to better support teachers with Learning through Play. Most SBMs have experience with online training and reported main challenges around lack of internet access and poor ICT familiarity.

COPs are seen as the best way to support on Learning through Play, if they are conducted with clear planning and coordination and enough resources to prepare on. To best engage with COPs, SBMs suggest focusing on planning and coordination, with a clear indication of materials to prepare on. To support the course through COPs, SBMs suggested organizing a session for each unit, providing detailed materials with examples, creating a group to connect teachers and visiting other schools to learn about best practices. COPs are seen as the best way to support teachers with new methodologies. One SBM suggested holding face-to-face sessions across schools to exchange suggestions.

As long as school leaders are informed of Learning through Play's benefits, they are reported to be supportive of its use in the classroom. SBMs suggested that school leaders are also included in a shorter version of the course, that they are connected to their peers from other schools to share experiences, and that school leaders advocate for the benefits of Learning through Play with parents.

The following recommendations were made based on the main findings of the pilot design study. The conclusions and recommendations section provides more details on the rationale of each statement.

1. Device access would be eased by coordinating with school leaders to ensure time at school for work on the course, providing an offline version of the course, and providing routers to teachers.
2. Adding options for resuming a unit after pausing it, navigating back to previous slides, and zooming in would make platform access easier. Testing the platform on smartphones used by teachers before rollout is also recommended.
3. Establishing a support group or contact person for ICT challenges would help some teachers with troubleshooting and learning about best practices.
4. The course should use as many visual elements and contextualized practical applications as possible. Including a glossary would help teachers with difficult terminology.
5. Include specific, actionable guidance in the course on how to design inclusive playful activities and how to adapt activities to resource-constrained settings.
6. Each COP session should aim to cover one unit of the course, providing SBMs with example-based learning aids and ensuring that they have time for preparation.
7. Organizing visits to other schools would help learning about best practices and how to overcome challenges. Setting up a network among teachers would allow them to discuss challenges ahead of COP sessions.
8. Involving school leaders in a shortened version of the course, with an additional focus on advocacy with parents, would help raise awareness on Learning through Play.

1. Project Background

Ninety-two percent of children in low-income countries are predicted to reach adulthood without the skills they need to thrive (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016). In light of this, holistic skills development has become a priority in education to ensure improved academic performance, socio-emotional skills and outcomes in physical and psychosocial wellbeing.

This is partly due to a lack of quality training for teachers on how to implement play-based learning in the classroom. Right To Play, the LEGO Foundation, the Government of Rwanda and the University of Cambridge are attempting to address this through a comprehensive hybrid e-training program for teachers in Rwanda, relying on the scalability, accessibility, cost-effectiveness and impact of online training. Rwanda has been identified as an optimal location to test this approach given its efforts in becoming a leader in the technology and education spaces.

This Learning through Play E-training and Certification project will be implemented through a blended Continuous Professional Development (CPD) approach. It will train, certify, and mentor lower primary teachers (P1-P3) in Rwanda to deliver the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) through Learning through Play, inspiring them to facilitate more collaborative, engaging, and playful learning classrooms. The Learning through Play training will be accredited by the University of Rwanda's College of Education (UR-CE) and hosted on Rwanda Education Board's Learning Management System. UR-CE lecturers will facilitate the course both face to face and online. The project was piloted first with a small "pre-alpha" cohort of 30 lower primary teachers (approximately 25% male, 75% female, reflecting the predominance of female teachers at lower primary level), before eventually expanding to a total of seven districts in Rwanda (Burera, Muhanga, Musanze, Ngoma, Ngororero, Nyanza, and Rwamagana), reaching 304 public and government aided schools and up to 3,343 lower primary teachers (25% male, 75% female), who will in turn reach up to 158,837 lower primary learners. The project will adopt a user-centred design and co-creation approach, giving teachers a central role in the design process of the e-learning platform and blended training approach from the very beginning.

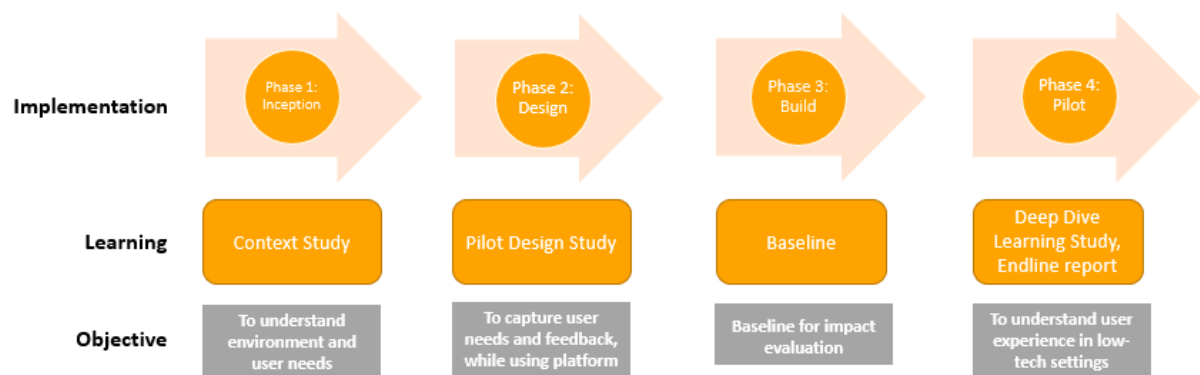
The project aims to achieve impact by addressing two long-term outcomes:

1. Improve teacher classroom practice in delivering the CBC through the implementation of Learning through Play in lower primary classrooms.
2. Increase Right To Play's ability to develop and deliver scalable, playful online Teacher Professional Development.

To answer research questions around these and any related outcomes, the monitoring, evaluation and learning plan developed by Right To Play, Laterite and Oxford MeasurEd includes (see Figure 1):

- A **context learning study** to inform the design of the Learning through Play e-course based on educators' needs.
- A **pilot design study** to improve the e-learning and certification course prototype through user insights.
- A **deep dive study** into opportunities and challenges surrounding scalability of the Learning through Play e-course.
- A **baseline and endline evaluation** to assess whether teachers' participation in the Learning through Play e-course results in changes in their knowledge and improved perceptions and behaviours of Learning through Play.

Figure 1. Overview of learning studies in relation to Right To Play implementation stages



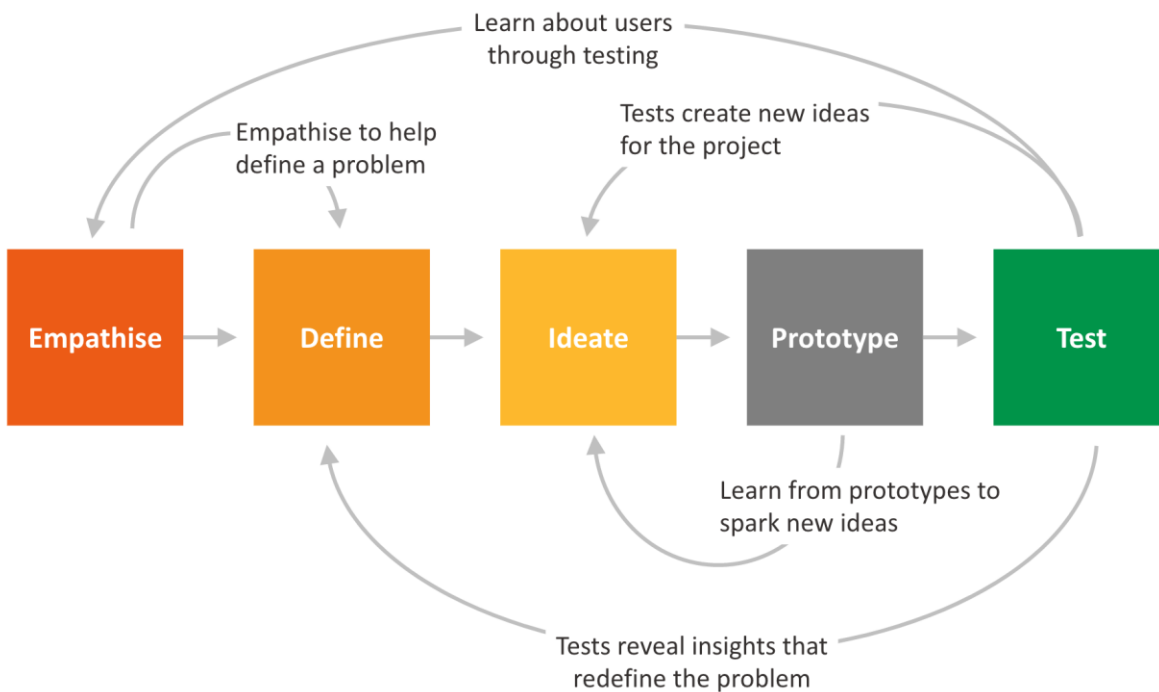
2. Study Purpose, Objective and Questions

Situating the Pilot Design Study in the innovation pathway

During October 2022, Laterite and Oxford MeasurEd conducted a workshop with the Right To Play team to discuss design thinking processes and the role that evidence plays at each stage of the process of moving to scale with EdTech innovations. This pilot design study represents the second step for us as learning partners to collect and analyse data to support progress along this pathway, after the context study that was conducted in November 2022.

When we look at **Figure 2** below, we can see a process for design thinking. This is an iterative and cyclical process which begins with a focus on understanding the users and context for innovation before solutions are ideated, prototyped and tested.

Figure 2. Overview of Design Process²

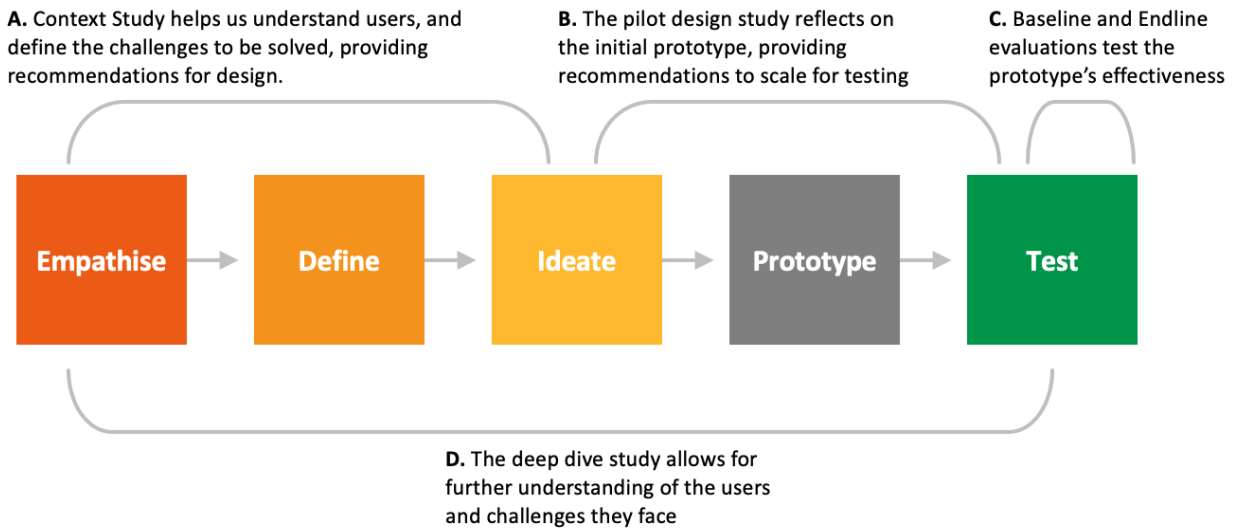


For the purpose of planning our learning partnership, we can overlay this pathway with the studies and design activities that will take place over the next two years. In the overlay shown in **Figure 3**, we can see that the pilot design plays a key role in the **ideate, prototype and test** process. We will use the data from this study to look at how users are engaging with the e-learning and certification course's first prototype, as well as test the efficacy of the course's features, content and access modalities. This understanding will allow us, as learning partners,

² This model was first proposed by the Stanford Design School (Stanford d.school), but is now commonly used by a range of organisations working in design thinking.

to make evidence-based recommendations to support Right To Play in improving the ideation process.

Figure 3. Role of Learning Partnership in Design Process

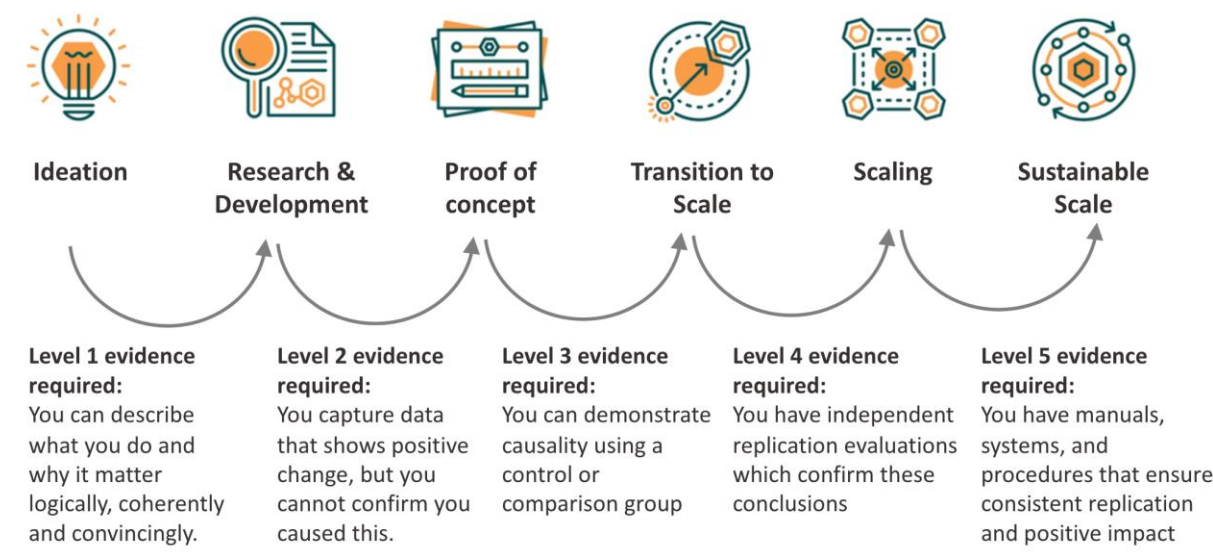


Standards of Evidence

Another key framework guiding our work as learning partners is an understanding of the levels and types of evidence needed to move an innovation to scale. Presented in **Figure 4**, this framework presents six levels of evidence which move from ideation to sustainable scale. For each of these levels, the model outlines what level and types of evidence are sufficient to allow an innovation to move to the next stage. Following this pathway ensures that an innovation has enough evidence to support scaling, but also ensures that unnecessary data is not being collected too early in the process.

As presented above, we aim to support the ideation process with the pilot design study. This means we are looking to reach **level two** in this evidence pathway. The outputs of this study should therefore allow us to **capture data that shows a positive change from the e-learning and certification project, and pathways to improve this, without any robust evidence for causality**. We can use this standard to reflect on whether the pilot design study has supported the programme in reaching the level of evidence required to reach level two on the evidence pathway.

Figure 4. Levels of evidence to move from ideation to scale³



Study Objectives

To fulfil the evidence needs outlined above, the data collection for the pilot design study focused on questions of **teachers'** experiences and challenges with the E-learning and certification course, and of **School-Based Mentors'** (SBMs) experiences and challenges with providing support on the course. Specifically, we sought to answer the following questions:

- What are teachers' experiences and challenges with accessing the e-learning and certification course's platform?
- What are teachers' experiences and challenges with understanding the e-learning and certification course's content?
- What are teachers' experiences and challenges with applying Learning through Play in the classroom? What are the expected challenges while applying it in the future?
- What are School-Based Mentors' experiences with providing support on Learning through Play and online training? What challenges do they expect to face?
- What are School-Based Mentors' experiences with supporting teachers through Communities of Practice? How can Communities of Practice be organized to ensure teachers are supported through the e-learning and certification course?
- According to School-Based Mentors, what are the potential challenges with ensuring support from school leaders with Learning through Play and Continuous Professional Development?

³ This model is adapted by Oxford MeasurEd from UNICEF's scaling innovation strategy. For more information see: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/media/4551/file/Scaling%20Innovation%20for%20Every%20Child%20v2.pdf>

3. Research Methodology and Limitations

For this study, we deployed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with teachers from the pre-alpha cohort (involved in testing the course prototype), and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) with School-Based Mentors (SBMs) from the same pre-alpha cohort. The following sections describe in more detail the methodologies used to collect and analyse data, as well as the limitations that come with each method.

Focus Group Discussions

The aim of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was to collect detailed information about teachers' experiences accessing the E-learning and certification course platform, engaging with the content, and applying their learnings in the classroom. Particular importance was given to the goals highlighted in the pilot design study research questions:

1. To understand teachers' experiences and challenges accessing the E-learning and certification course
2. To understand teachers' experiences and challenges engaging with the E-learning and certification course content
3. To understand teachers' experiences and challenges applying Learning through Play in the classroom

A total of 4 FGDs were conducted in the district of Musanze, where all teachers from the pre-alpha cohort were gathered due to a previous workshop with the instructional designer for the E-learning and certification course. The FGDs included a total of 25 teachers from 4 districts: Musanze, Ngororero, Nyanza and Rwamagana. Each discussion involved between 5 to 7 participants, with a mix of male and female teachers.

Each FGD was organized in three sections, where each section corresponded to one of the research questions outlined above. The discussion was conducted in Kinyarwanda and organized so that after each question, participants could intervene and discuss, with the moderator asking any follow-up questions following the probes suggested by the discussion guide if needed. In the second section, focused on understanding teachers' engagement with the course, teachers were asked to go through one unit of the course⁴ on their personal device for 10 minutes, and a discussion followed. This ensured that participants had immediate familiarity with the main features of the course before answering any questions. The total duration of the discussion was 2 hours and 10 minutes, including the introduction, obtaining consent from respondents, an icebreaker at the start and a break halfway through the session.

⁴ Teachers in all groups tested unit 5, the latest to be developed for the pre-alpha cohort at the time.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The aim of the Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) was to collect detailed information from School-Based Mentors (SBMs) about their preparation to support with the E-learning and certification course, their experience with Communities of Practice (CoPs), and support from school leadership with the course. SBMs are more qualified teachers that are selected to provide professional development, capacity building and mentoring activities to fellow teachers in their school as part of the national school-based mentorship program. As part of their responsibilities, they organise COP sessions with teachers. As part of the E-learning and certification course, teachers will participate in Communities of Practice (COPs) at the school level, where Subject-Based Mentors (SBMs) support them in going through course content as well as play a key role in coaching and mentoring by conducting monthly coaching visits and classroom observations of teachers taking the course.

Particular importance was given to the goals highlighted in the pilot design study research questions:

1. To understand SBMs' experiences and challenges supporting with Learning through Play and online training
2. To understand SBMs' experiences and challenges supporting teachers through Communities of Practice
3. To understand SBMs' experiences and challenges with support from school leadership on teachers' professional development and Learning through Play

A total of 4 SSIs were conducted in the district of Musanze, where all SBMs in the pre-alpha cohort were gathered due to a previous workshop with the instructional designer for the E-learning and certification course. The SSIs included a total of 4 SBMs, one for each of the districts in the pre-alpha cohort: Musanze, Ngororero, Nyanza and Rwamagana.

Each SSI was organized in three sections, where each section corresponded to one of the research questions outlined above. After each question, the moderator asked any follow-up questions following the probes in the interview guide if needed. The total duration of the interview was 1 hour and 20 minutes, including an introduction and obtaining consent from the respondent.

Analysis

Data from both FGDs and SSIs was analysed by first developing a deductive codebook and then adapting it based on the transcripts. After the FGDs and SSIs were conducted, recordings were transcribed and translated from Kinyarwanda into English. In the meantime, we developed a codebook following a deductive approach: the main themes to be coded in the discussions were listed following the study's research questions and interview guides. The transcripts were then

coded in MaxQDA qualitative analysis software and the codebook adapted as new themes or sub-themes emerged. After coding, we analysed the findings by summarising the main points of each theme and collecting relevant quotes to add depth.

The rationale for our choice of qualitative deductive thematic analysis was as follows. First, we used a purely qualitative approach to draw out nuanced, detailed and unexpected information from respondents. We did not use a semi-quantitative approach, such as reporting relative frequencies of each theme, because we judged it not to have value in this case, especially given the limited number of discussions and interviews. Second, we used a deductive approach to thematic analysis because the research questions had been pre-agreed with Right to Play and thus there was a need to present findings systematically against those research questions. We did not, for example, deploy an inductive approach in which themes were identified in the transcripts very independently the research instruments. However, we did adapt the codes to incorporate any new or unexpected subthemes mentioned by respondents.

Limitations

The four FGDs and four SSIs conducted for this report may or may not yield conclusions that qualitatively represent the overall target population of Right to Play. Thus, they can only be very cautiously generalized to our sample of interest, if at all. In this case, the sample size was also constrained by the size of the available sampling frame, i.e., the pre-alpha cohort, consisting of a total of 30 teachers (including the four SBMs). Another issue related to FGDs is that in cases where a majority expresses similar opinions on a topic, a ‘silencing effect’ could take place, where minority voices do not feel comfortable expressing their dissent. This would imply that only the opinion of the majority of teachers in a group is reported in the four focus group discussions with them, although the interviews with the SBMs would capture individual perspectives more fully.

4. Findings

In this section we present the findings that emerged from the data. We first report findings from the FGDs with teachers and then those from the SSIs with SBMs. The six sub-themes – three addressed by teachers, and three addressed by SBMs – directly correspond to the six study objectives described in section 2.

P1-P3 Teachers

Description of the participants

The majority of participants are female and have a wide range of age. Out of 25 teachers who participated in FGDs, the number of female participants was twice the number of male participants (66.67% women vs 33.33% men). The age distribution ranges from 23 to 63 years old and the average age is 38 years old.

Considering the teachers' previous experience on undertaking online courses, a small proportion of approximately 17% (n= 4) reported having an online course previously.

Based on four qualitative FGDs conducted with an average of eight teachers each, we present findings on three areas in the following sub-sections:

- i. Accessing the course platform
- ii. Course content
- iii. Applying Learning through Play in the classroom

Accessing the course platform

While most teachers access the course platform from their smartphone at home, computers are generally preferred. Most teachers completed all five units of the course so far, while only a minority reported not being able to complete unit 2 because of technical issues with access credentials. The majority of teachers reported using smartphones to access the course, while a significant number use computers at school. Some reported using a hybrid approach where they use the computer from school during weekdays and a smartphone from home in the weekends or evenings. In general, all teachers that use smartphones access the course from home, while those that use computers always access the course at their school. Those that use computers usually access the course every day, since they only have time to attend between classes and school

"It is also difficult for smartphones to access the internet. For instance, in my area, I could try to access the courses but fail to get strong internet. It required me to move to another place so I could access [a] fair internet. Our area does not have enough internet connectivity for WhatsApp calls."

Teacher

commitments. Those that access through smartphones typically access the course two or three times a week. Computers are preferred by most teachers as they are able to display the course content better, and due to the better internet connection found at school compared to connectivity at home.

Connectivity is the most common challenge for smartphone access, while time constraints are most important for those who attend the course at school via computer. The most commonly reported challenge with accessing the course via smartphone has to do with internet connectivity and data. Those that access the course from home usually have limited connectivity to access the course content, and when they are able to visualize the content, videos consume a lot of their available data. For those that access the course at school with a computer, the main challenge has to do with finding the time to complete a unit during the day. Some teachers reported that they had to miss classes to be able to make progress with the course.

Teachers asked to be supported with better connection or an offline version of the course (this is an issue that Right to Play has anticipated and will be providing teachers with monthly data bundles). When asked about technical support they might need, many teachers requested access to routers or 4G connection. Others suggested offering an offline, downloadable version of the course that they can access at home after downloading it at school.

The main challenges with the course platform are related to poor fit to device, poor familiarity with technology, and the lack of some navigation features. When discussing challenges with the EasyGenerator platform, many participants reported issues with visualizing the content on their smartphones. The devices they use are typically outdated or have insufficient storage or processing capacity to be able to display some videos and visual elements, and the absence of a “zoom” option made it difficult for them to read subtitles or text. Another challenge has to do with technology familiarity: some teachers reported not being familiar with processes such as storing a username and password, which forced them to use the anonymous access option in many cases. Others reported issues with technical features of the platform: the lack of an option to resume a unit in case it is interrupted before being completed, and the lack of an option to go back to previous slides, made navigating the units difficult for many participants. In addition, the absence of subtitles in some of the videos created issues with understanding the language for a few.

“I wanted to talk about device support; it can help us to access the courses. Everyone can have no reason to say that this or that happened. Additionally, besides accessing those devices, we can all create time and meet so we can discuss some matters. When people

The main suggestions to improve the platform experience have to do with better navigation features and establishing a support group to exchange best practices on technology. When providing suggestions of improvements to the platform, many participants suggested to add navigation features such as the possibility to zoom in, to resume a unit when interrupted, and to go back to previous slides. Some teachers suggested fostering the creation of a formalized group where peers can share best practices on how to overcome technological roadblocks.

meet and discuss, many things get sorted out.”

Teacher

Course content

Teachers reported a positive experience with the unit’s content, praising its use of scenarios, visual elements, and exercises to foster learning. After testing the course during the unit observation section, teachers generally reported an interesting and engaging experience with the content of unit 5 (focused on how to conduct assessments). Many participants mentioned the vocabulary used in the text and most videos as easy to understand, especially if compared to

previous units. Participants also noted that the use of stories or scenarios, and the use of images and videos, was very helpful to illustrate the concepts learned and make them more concrete. The exercises present throughout the unit, along with the option of trying again until one gets the right answer, were also mentioned as useful to understand the unit’s concepts better.

“For instance, there are stories about a teacher named Mutesi and another named Jacques. Reading these stories allowed me to enhance the concepts I was studying. It was rewarding to see how the stories aligned with the definition we learned.”

Teacher

Challenging features of the unit and course had to do with the use of more difficult accents and terminology and with long paragraphs. Teachers were also asked about which areas of the unit (and in general of the course) made understanding of the content more difficult. Although the vocabulary used in the unit was seen as helpful, some teachers noted that the use of American English in some videos, in terms of both accent and terminology, was difficult for them to grasp, as many are used to British English and a different accent. Moreover, some teachers noted that the use of long text in some paragraphs and exercises (especially in exercises where they were meant to match two statements) forced them to go through the text multiple times without understanding its main point.

The main suggestions for improvement involved introducing a glossary for difficult terminology, replacing text with visual elements where possible, and including as many contextualized examples as possible. To overcome the challenges on vocabulary mentioned above, participants suggested including an offline, printable glossary as addition to the course so that they could refer to definitions of complex words whenever they encounter them (such as the word “scaffolding”). Another suggestion was to include as many examples and visual elements as possible (as opposed to text), and to tailor examples and language to the Rwandan context to make them more concrete for participants.

“[...] just as how they prepare this link of the course, they can add another link of the meaning of difficult keywords. This link would be like a small dictionary where you would be able to find the meaning of all the difficult words.”

Teacher

Applying Learning through Play in the classroom

All teachers reported a positive experience with applying Learning through Play in the classroom, mentioning improvements in students’ learning, retention and collaboration. All teachers in the study reported they were able to apply at least a part of the course content in their classroom. Their feedback was generally very positive: participants reported having a positive and insightful experience and being able to overcome their initial scepticism and challenges with time and classroom management, the more they practiced with the content. When discussing the benefits of Learning through Play, many teachers reported positive outcomes in the form of improved learning and retention by students, since games help them to

remember classes more clearly. Participants also reported improved collaboration among students, which led to easier classroom management for the teacher. Overall, many teachers also reported a more positive teaching experience, mentioning Learning through Play as a useful tool that reduces the teacher’s workload if appropriate learning materials are available. One aspect to note that came out of the discussion is that many teachers are still associating Learning through Play with the use of specific games, rather than with an overall change in teaching practices.

“Based on the skills I developed, I realized that it would be easy for me to apply what I learned since students create groups. When students are in groups, it is not necessary to correct many students; you don’t correct each student, you correct a group instead and the group has guidelines.”

Teacher

The main challenges on applying Learning through Play in the classroom have to do with lack of knowledge on inclusive games, the need for support from school leadership, the lack of learning materials, overcrowded classrooms and time constraints. When discussing the challenges they experienced or they foresee experiencing when applying Learning through Play, many teachers mentioned the lack of information and knowledge on how to adapt games for students with disabilities, which implied excluding them from activities in some occasions.

Another issue has to do with support from school leadership. Many participants mentioned that school leaders need to be aware of Learning through Play's benefits and practices to support them with finances, learning materials and flexibility in teaching methods, such as allowing teachers to be outside with their students to teach through an outdoor activity. A third issue mentioned by participants is the lack of raw or finished learning materials to support any games or activities. Finally, many teachers reported resource constraints as a major barrier to implementing Learning through Play, both in terms of lack of classroom space to coordinate a playful activity indoors with many students, and in terms of lack of time in a classroom period to be able to explain rules to students and then coordinate the activity within 40 minutes. On the last point, however, some teachers reported that time management usually improved as they became more experienced with Learning through Play.

School-Based Mentors

We conducted four semi-structured interviews with SBMs and analysed their feedback in relation to three areas, described in the following sub-sections:

- i. SBMs' experience with supporting online training and Learning through Play
- ii. SBMs' experience with Communities of Practice (COPs)
- iii. Support from school leadership in relation to Continuous Professional Development and Learning through Play.

Supporting online training and Learning through Play

SBMs do not have experience with Learning through Play, but all of them are confident they would be able to support teachers if provided with training materials. Only one in four SBMs had previous training on Learning through Play, only consisting of a short course from Inspire, Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda. However, some reported having experience with advising teachers on integrating games into their classes, and all participants reported being confident with supporting teachers if they received sufficient training beforehand. All participants were confident that teachers would not face major challenges in understanding and applying the main concepts of Learning through Play. However, some SBMs mentioned potential challenges with managing overcrowded classrooms, and others mentioned challenges with lack of knowledge about inclusive games and activities for students with disabilities.

SBMs suggested to provide COP guidelines, to create more free time in their schedules, and to encourage the involvement of school leadership to better support teachers with Learning through Play. When providing suggestions on how to support teachers with Learning through Play, SBMs requested to receive detailed training themselves and support on how to structure Communities of Practice's guidelines, with materials explaining how to integrate inclusive games and how to manage overcrowded classrooms. Some participants also suggested that free time be created in their teaching schedules, so that they are able to better prepare for the topic. Moreover, one SBM suggested that visits and monitoring by school leadership (along with participation in COPs on Learning through Play) are important to keep teacher motivation high and to identify and solve challenges together with teachers. Another suggestion by some participants was to include as many videos and examples as possible in the course, so that teachers are able to see concrete applications of the concepts they learn.

"It is essential for headteachers to attend these COPs in order to be aware of the proceedings and the challenges faced, enabling them to collaborate and find solutions together."

School-Based Mentor

Most SBMs have experience with online training. The main challenges have to do with lack of internet access and poor ICT familiarity. Three out of four SBMs reported having attended online training in the past, and two have some experience supporting with online training during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main challenges reported by participants has to do with poor internet access to complete the course: many suggested providing routers to participants to solve the issue. Another potential barrier is teachers' lack of familiarity with ICT and technology in general, which led SBMs to suggest basic ICT support training for them to be able to support with any challenges. A last challenge, also mentioned for support with Learning through Play, has to do with the lack of time available to SBMs to prepare for COPs and support teachers, since they are fully occupied with teaching duties.

Communities of Practice

To best engage with COPs, SBMs suggest a focus on planning and coordination, with a clear indication of materials to prepare with. SBMs' typical role in COPs is to oversee the agenda, choose the topic and teacher to lead the session, and provide support to the teacher on how to prepare. The main challenge reported by SBMs to support with the sessions is about the lack of time available to them to go through any relevant materials, given that SBMs are full-time teachers. Another minor challenge reported by some has to do with the mentality of more experienced teachers, who might be less open to learning about new teaching methods. Best practices shared by participants revolve around preparing the sessions by outlining a clear agenda and learning materials to refer to, and choosing a teacher that is knowledgeable about the topic they are going to lead the session on. One SBM suggested that the timing of COPs should be made more flexible, so that some topics can be covered in more than the one hour allocated to the session.

To support the course through COPs, SBMs suggested organizing a session for each unit, providing detailed materials with examples, creating a group to connect teachers and visiting other schools to learn about best practices. To best be able to organize COPs for the E-learning and certification course, SBMs suggested having one COP for each unit of the course, so that teachers could report any specific challenges and that the agenda of each meeting is well-defined. Another suggestion was to include as many examples as possible in the COP guide, so that SBMs have specific materials to refer to when supporting teachers. Some participants also suggested creating a WhatsApp group to be able to connect teachers before COPs take place, so that issues and challenges can already be discussed in advance. A final suggestion by SBMs involved organizing visits to other schools that are applying Learning through Play in the classroom, to observe and learn about best practices by other teachers.

“If possible, it would be great if the teachers had someone to guide them regularly. Or a WhatsApp group where anyone can get support any time.”

School-Based Mentor

COPs are seen as the best way to support teachers with new methodologies. One SBM suggested holding face-to-face sessions across schools to exchange suggestions. When asked about channels to learn about new methodologies such as Learning through Play, most SBMs still mentioned COPs and the use of WhatsApp groups as useful. There was universal agreement among participants that COPs are effective at supporting teachers with new methods, if conducted following the best practices they outlined. WhatsApp groups were seen as more volatile: some SBMs reported that after initial participation by teachers, members tend to lose focus and not use the group for support on a regular basis. One SBM suggested that holding face-to-face information sessions across schools, such as at the sector level, could be helpful to support teachers with Learning through Play and exchange ideas across schools on how to overcome challenges.

Support from school leadership

School leadership is generally supportive of CPD and Learning through Play, as long as the leaders are informed of the practice’s benefits and have the resources to support teachers with. When asked about the attitude of school leadership towards Continuous Professional Development and Learning through Play, all SBMs reported that school leaders have been supportive and open. In the case of Learning through Play, school leaders are reported to understand the benefits on reducing student dropout and improving learning outcomes. One challenge mentioned by participants is that not all school leaders might be aware of those benefits, which could create tensions with teachers implementing the method in the classroom. Another challenge that was mentioned has to do with the lack of finances at the school level to purchase learning materials for teachers.

SBMs suggested that school leaders are also included in a shorter version of the course, that they are connected to their peers from other schools to share experiences, and that school leaders advocate for the benefits of Learning through Play with parents. To improve and facilitate support from school leaders on Learning through Play, some SBMs suggested involving them with ad hoc, shorted training sessions to inform them about Learning through Play, its modalities and its benefits. Other suggested gathering school leaders at the district or national level (for instance via a WhatsApp group) so that they are able to share experiences and challenges with peers. Another suggestion was to involve school leaders in explaining the benefits of Learning through Play to parents, who are typically not aware of it and might think that their children are not really learning when engaged in playful activities.

“Sometimes, we and the school leader may be aware of that, but if the parent is not aware of that and hears their children telling them that they spent hours playing, the parent will think that the children have been playing instead of studying. Parents should be informed by the leaders.”

School-Based Mentor

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to build our understanding of:

- a) What are teachers' experiences and challenges with accessing the E-learning and certification course's platform?
- b) What are teachers' experiences and challenges with understanding the E-learning and certification course's content?
- c) What are teachers' experiences and challenges with applying Learning through Play in the classroom?
- d) What are School-Based Mentors' potential challenges with providing support on Learning through Play and online training?
- e) How can Communities of Practice and other methods be organized to ensure teachers are supported through the E-learning and certification course?
- f) What are the potential challenges with ensuring support from school leaders with Learning through Play and Continuous Professional Development?

To answer these questions, we presented data both from 4 qualitative FGDs with teachers and 4 qualitative SSIs with SBMs, all from the pre-alpha cohort involved in testing the course prototype. From that data we can draw several conclusions, here grouped by the six questions above. Where relevant we have included recommendations, based on these conclusions, for Right to Play to consider when working on the course before rollout.

Teacher access to the platform and course

The main barriers to accessing devices are connectivity for those who use smartphones and time constraints for those who use computers. Teachers either use a computer at school to access the course, facing challenges with finding time to do so, or use a smartphone from home, which is made difficult by poor connectivity. Teachers that use computers at school reported having to miss classes to complete course units, because of the limited time available during the workday to access the device. On the other hand, participants who use smartphones at home are not able to access the course during their free time due to poor internet access.

Recommendation 1. Device access would be eased by coordinating with school leaders to ensure time at school for work on the course, providing an offline version of the course, and providing routers to teachers.

For those who access the course at school, it will be essential to ensure that some time is protected so that they are able to focus on the course without having conflicting commitments. Coordination with school leadership could be able to help with this.

For teachers who use smartphones and face connectivity issues, providing an offline version of the course (if possible) could solve the challenge, as teachers would be able to download the course unit while at school and go through it at home in the evenings or weekends. Another

potential solution, although less practical, would be to provide routers to groups of teachers so that they meet in a convenient location during their free time to be able to access the course through their smartphone.

Accessing the course platform is made difficult by teachers' poor familiarity with technology and by a lack of navigation features, especially for smartphones. The absence of some navigation features and the poor fit of the course to teachers' smartphones made accessing the platform challenging for many. Lack of ICT familiarity was also a barrier for some. Not being able to resume the course after pausing it for some time, or not being able to go back to previous slides to revise content, were mentioned as challenging platform features by many participants. Teachers also noted that the platform is not well displayed on their personal smartphones, with very small text and pictures and without the option of zooming in where needed. Finally, some teachers reported facing general barriers with technology, and processes such as storing a username and password without having a troubleshooting guide or person to refer to.

Recommendation 2. Adding options for resuming a unit after pausing it, navigating back to previous slides, and zooming in would make platform access easier. Testing the platform on smartphones used by teachers before rollout is also recommended.

Adding these features requested by teachers would make navigation of each unit smoother and more effective. The “resume” option would allow teachers, especially those with computers, to complete each unit in different sessions whenever they find available time at school. The “back” option would allow all participants to refresh their minds on concepts mentioned earlier on in the unit, which would ensure better retention of the concepts learned in the course. Finally, adding the option to zoom in the content and testing the platform on smartphones models common among teachers would ensure that teachers are able to visualize the content well on their personal devices.

Recommendation 3. Establishing a support group or contact person for ICT challenges would help some teachers with troubleshooting and learning about best practices.

Teachers in the FGDs reported that the network created by the pre-alpha cohort was useful for them to ask peers about challenges with technology and how to overcome them. As the course is rolled out, establishing similar support systems (such as WhatsApp groups at the school level) would be helpful to replicate the same process. Another suggestion from SSIs was to provide basic ICT training to SBMs, so that they can provide support to teachers with platform issues when needed.

Teachers' experience of course content

The use of visual and practical elements in the course made understanding the content easier for teachers. Teachers reported good understanding of the course content, praising its visual elements and practical applications to real-life situations. The use of scenarios, pictures and videos was reported to be helpful, especially when contextualized to situations that teachers could encounter in their daily life. Exercises were also reported to be helpful to practice what they learned. The few challenges mentioned had to do with the use of long blocks of text, or the use of difficult terminology and accents.

Recommendation 4. The course should use as many visual elements and contextualized practical applications as possible. Including a glossary would help teachers with difficult terminology.

The use of visual elements, examples and exercises has been reported to help teachers with engagement and understanding. The language and situations portrayed should be contextualized as much as possible so that participants can identify themselves with those scenarios.

In cases of difficult or new terminology, having an offline, printable glossary as accompaniment to the course was mentioned by some as a useful tool to refer to. This would also help teachers enrich their vocabulary specific to Learning through Play.

Teachers' experiences applying Learning through Play

Applying Learning through Play led to better learning and teaching outcomes, but resource constraints and lack of knowledge on inclusive games still pose challenges. Participants' experience of applying Learning through Play was positive for both students and teachers, but many mentioned challenges with including students with disabilities and managing overcrowded, under-resourced classrooms. All teachers in the study reported applying Learning through Play with positive outcomes in terms of students' understanding, retention and collaboration, and in terms of teachers' classroom management and teaching experience (including reduced workload). However, all participants reported being unable to include students with disabilities in playful activities, and many expect challenges with the lack of learning materials at school and managing classrooms of many students in constrained spaces.

Recommendation 5. Include specific, actionable guidance in the course on how to design inclusive playful activities and how to adapt activities to resource-constrained settings.

Inclusiveness of students with disabilities could be a cross-cutting theme across course units, to ensure that teachers are consistently provided information on how to adapt their activities

to all students in the classroom. Classroom management and the use of learning materials could be the focus of separate, dedicated units.

Challenges faced by SBMs to support Learning through Play and online training

While SBMs only have limited familiarity with Learning through Play, they do not foresee any structural challenges with the course. SBMs reported not to have experience with Learning through Play and to have some experience with online training. The challenges they expect reflect what was mentioned by teachers in the FGDs. The main challenges mentioned by SBMs around online training have to do with poor connectivity and the lack of familiarity with technology of some teachers, which reflect what was reported in the FGDs. When discussing Learning through Play, SBMs mainly mentioned potential challenges with COPs and support from school leadership, which will be discussed in the next sub-sections.

Communities of Practice

COPs work well when there is clear coordination and agendas for each session, and SBMs have enough time for preparation. Being connected to peers is also important to exchange best practices. SBMs reported that coordination and a clear indication of learning materials are key aspects to ensure that COPs are effective in supporting teachers. They also mentioned the challenge of not having enough time to prepare for sessions. When indicating best practices to organize effective COPs, SBMs mainly mentioned the need for good preparation, coordination, and agenda-setting. This raised the challenge of SBMs not having adequate time to prepare the materials for each session, since all of them have full-time teaching duties. Another point raised by SBMs was around the need of learning materials with concrete examples to be able to support teachers with any challenges in the application of Learning through Play.

SBMs also reported that methods focused on connecting teachers with their peers can provide valuable support on any challenges. SBMs mentioned the usefulness of support groups for teachers, or of being able to discuss issues with the course ahead of sessions.

Recommendation 6. Each COP session should aim to cover one unit of the course, providing SBMs with example-based learning aids and ensuring that they have time for preparation.

Ensuring that each session only covers one unit would clarify the objective of the COP and allow teachers to raise any challenges with what they learned in the unit. It would also be an additional incentive for teachers to complete the unit before each session.

SBMs also requested for learning aids with plenty of examples and scenarios to solve the most common challenges reported by teachers. This was also reported as a useful learning method by teachers in the FGDs.

Recommendation 7. Organizing visits to other schools would help learning about best practices and how to overcome challenges. Setting up a network among teachers would allow them to discuss challenges ahead of COP sessions.

Visits to other schools could be organized as a complement to COPs and would support the exchange of ideas among teachers who normally do not interact with each other. This would also foster motivation to apply Learning through Play in the classroom, after seeing others overcome challenges.

At the same time, teachers could be connected through WhatsApp groups so that they are able to reflect with peers and share challenges with the units ahead of COPs. This would ensure that participants are already familiar with each COP session's topic and would foster engagement with COPs.

Support from school leaders

The only challenges from school leadership on Learning through Play come from lack of awareness of the practice and lack of resources to support teachers with materials. SBMs reported that school leaders are generally supportive of CPD and Learning through Play, especially if they are aware of their potential benefits for school performance and learning outcomes. The main potential challenges mentioned in the SSIs have to do with school leaders not knowing about Learning through Play and thinking that teachers are wasting time with their students. The same was reported for parents: some SBMs expressed concern about the need to advocate for the benefits of playful learning with them, to avoid any misunderstandings. An additional challenge had to do with potential tensions arising from teachers requesting learning materials for Learning through Play, and school leaders being constrained by school finances.

Recommendation 8. Involving school leaders in a shortened version of the course, with an additional focus on advocacy with parents, would help raise awareness on Learning through Play.

SBMs suggested including basic elements of Learning through Play such as its definition and scope, its uses and benefits for children learning. This would ensure that school leadership is aware of the potential of playful learning for improving outcomes in their school. An additional advocacy component would help spread awareness of the practice around communities and outside of schools.

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Annex A: Research Instruments

Focus Group Discussions Guide

Consent form for all participants

RESEARCH COMPANY: Laterite Ltd.

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATION: Right to Play

AFFILIATED GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION: Rwanda Education Board

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is _____. Welcome to this Focus Group Discussion and thank you so much for making the time to join us today, we really appreciate it. We are from Laterite, a data collection and research company based in Kigali, and we have been asked by the NGO Right to Play to write a report about teachers' experiences with the Learning through Play E-learning and certification course. If you have been able to share an email address or whatsapp number, we would be happy to share the final report, although it will be in English.

Right to Play would like to build a teacher training programme with an e-learning element to it, for primary school teachers in grades P1 to P3, about how to do more to incorporate "Learning through Play" into their classroom practices. The goal of this focus group discussion is to understand teachers' experiences with the course and Learning through Play so that Right to Play can improve it before scaling it up.

RISKS

There is no risk of harm to you during your participation in the research.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study, but your opinions and insights will be used to help Right to Play develop or improve its E-learning and certification course delivered through both online and in-person means, to foster the use of Learning through Play in the classroom.

AUDIO RECORDING, VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

We take your consent to participating in this Focus Group Discussion seriously. We would like to record the session; this is for transcription and translation purposes only and will be kept confidential. If you do not consent to participating in the Focus Group Discussion or to it being recorded for transcription and translation purposes, you are free to leave the session at any time.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to agree to be in this study and there will be no consequences to you if you refuse to participate. You will also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide, or can choose not to answer any or certain questions that you do not want to answer. Any personal information or views you share here will be kept strictly confidential.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to respect your privacy and keep your answers confidential, we will not share any personally identifiable responses with persons who are not members of the research team. No personally identifiable information or any information that can be identified with you will be published. The information you will share will be safely stored on Laterite's secure servers and only professional research staff from Laterite Ltd. and programme staff from Right to Play will have access to this information.

By signing the form, you agree to not disclose any information shared by other participants in this Focus Group Discussion.

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate and understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Respondent - Print Name:

Respondent Signature:

Date (Day/month/year):

My signature below shows that I voluntarily agree for the audio-record of the FGD guides.

Respondent Signature:

Pilot Design Study Focus Group Discussion Guide - Right to Play E-learning and certification Project

Objective: Right To Play is designing, building, and piloting a blended teacher training program on delivery of the Competence-Based Curriculum through play for lower primary teachers in Rwanda. The goal of this focus group discussion is to understand the experience and challenges so far in engaging with the online course. In particular, the interviews seek:

- To understand respondents' experiences and challenges with accessing and navigating the course
- To understand respondents' experiences and challenges with engaging with and understanding the course
- To understand respondents' experiences and challenges with applying the course content in the classroom

Format and participants:

- 4 participatory focus groups, targeting the 26 teachers (who are not School-Based Mentors) that are participating in the alpha stage of testing the E-learning and certification course
- Each focus group will contain 6 or 7 people, and will aspire to a mix between male and female teachers
- Up to two hours and 10 minutes
- Moderator and notetaker equipped with 4 pads of A1 flip chart paper, a few packs of marker pens, a few packs of colourful post-it notes
- Participants will be asked to bring the devices on which they access online training
- Participants seated in a circle

Format:

1. Introduction (15 minutes)
2. Theme 1: Accessing the online course (35 minutes)
3. Theme 2: Engaging with the course content (60 minutes)
4. Theme 3: Applying Learning through Play in the classroom (20 minutes)

FGD GUIDE

1. Introduction

15 minutes including introductions

Welcome to this Focus Group Discussion and thank you so much for making the time to join us today, we really appreciate it. We are from Laterite, a data collection and research company based in Kigali, and we have been asked by the NGO Right to Play to write a report about teacher training through education technology and your experience with the CPD course, called a “pilot design study”. If you have been able to share an email address, we would be happy to share the final report, although it will be in English.

Right to Play is designing a blended teacher training programme for primary school teachers in grades P1 to P3, about how to do more to incorporate “Learning through Play” into their classroom practices and to deliver the Competence-Based Curriculum. The goal of this focus group discussion is to understand the experiences and challenges that teachers are facing while testing the first version of the programme. The feedback that you give us is very important and will be used to improve the design of this training.

Before we dive into our discussion, could we please do a round of introductions? Please tell us:

- your name
- position
- school
- the device on which you mostly access the course, or which you plan to use (mobile phone/computer/tablet)
- how many times per week you tend to access the course (please remember there is no right or wrong answer!)

We are asking your position so we can better understand the context. All the personal information you share here is confidential, and nothing you say can be traced to you as an individual through our research.

Hand out a sheet of paper and pen to register names; this should later be typed up onto a computer. A photo of the original list should be sent to the data team

Thank you very much. Before we start the discussion, we will do a short ice-breaker to make sure that we remember everyone's names.

Moderator: grab a small ball and sit in a circle with the participants.

Now, who wants to start? Please say your name and pass the ball to another person in the circle. The person will repeat your name and recite theirs to the rest of the class, then they will pass the ball again. When they pass the ball, the next person recites the two previous names and their own before passing. And so on until we finish the circle.

When the list starts to get long, encourage the participants to help each other remember forgotten names.

2: Accessing the online training

35 minutes of discussion

In this section we are going to talk about your experiences with accessing the online course so far. Could you please make sure to raise your hand before speaking? Also, we could really appreciate you sharing as many details and examples as possible whenever you speak. Please remember you can speak freely and the results of this research will be anonymised: nothing you say will be traced back to you.

1. How many units of the course have you accessed so far? Were you able to finish the units you started? Why or why not?
 - a. If you have not accessed it yet, why not? Do you foresee any other challenges going forward?
2. What device did you use to access the course? Was this your device or someone else's? If you have not yet accessed the course, how do you plan to do so?
3. What was your experience with using this device to access the course? If you experienced challenges around accessing or using the device, what were they?
 - a. How did you address those challenges? Who could you ask for support and did this help you to access the course?
 - b. What was your experience using the online learning system (EasyGenerator – or name being used as part of the project)? Did you find it easy to use? Why or why not? Did it work well on your device? Why or why not? Did you face any challenges?
 - c. What type of technical support would you need in the future? What would you like to see in a Troubleshooting Guide to support access to the course?
4. What has been the main physical location in which you usually access the course? Please describe your experience accessing the course from that location including any challenges. Why did you choose that specific location?
5. Please describe your experience around finding time for the course and how it fits with other commitments at home or at school. Did you face any challenges in finding time for the course so far? What were they?

3: Engaging with the course content

15 minutes of going through the unit (and observing teachers in this process)

10 minutes of break

35 minutes of discussion

This next section of the discussion is going to be about engaging with the units of the course, in particular about understanding the language and content of the course.

We will first go through a unit individually for about 15 minutes. As we go through it, please note down any comments that you have about your experience with this course. Please raise your hand and talk to me if you get stuck or encounter any specific challenges. After this, we will take a break of 10 minutes and then we will discuss our answers together for 35 minutes. We will ask you about the content and other features.

Observation protocol for moderator:

1. *Note down which teachers raised their hands to ask for help and specify the challenge they have encountered.*
2. *Walk around the classroom as teachers are engaging with the course. For each teacher, sit beside them for 1 or 2 minutes and ask them to make any comments out loud about what they are doing, including any impressions, thoughts or frustrations they have as they go through the course. Note down any comments that they make and who made them.*

- *Short break of 10 minutes and ice breaker* -

Return to discussion

6. Is the content of this unit understandable to you or not? What is understandable and what is difficult to understand?
 - a. Which elements such as videos, interactive games have helped you to understand the content? Which ones did you find more difficult to go through? Why or why not?
 - b. What kind of content support would you like to have to understand this better in the future?
7. Did you find the content to be engaging and interesting or not? Which topics or features were more interesting, and which were less interesting? Why?

8. Moving away from this unit, what has been your experience with the content of the units you have taken so far?
 - a. What did you like about those units and why? What did you not like and why? What did you find challenging?

4: Applying Learning through Play in the classroom

20 minutes of discussion

In this section we are going to talk about your experiences with applying what you learnt in the course in the classroom. We will ask you about the challenges that you encountered in using Learning through Play in the classroom, or the challenges that you expect to encounter when using Learning through Play in the future. That will help us understand how the course can be improved to in that aspect.

9. Now, we would like to discuss how the Learning through Play practices recommended in the course so far can be applied in your own classroom situation. In your view, is the content relevant to your classroom? Why or why not?
 - a. What do you think can work well and what would be more difficult to apply? Why? Can you provide some examples?
10. Have you already tried to apply anything you learned on Learning through Play in the classroom after taking these units?
 - a. If so, what worked well and what was challenging?
 - b. If you have not yet applied the content, what do you think might be easier to try? What do you think may be more challenging?
11. Are there any further points you would like to discuss that we have not asked about? Do you have any questions for us?

- Thank you for your time and valuable participation! -

Semi-Structured Interviews Guide

Consent form for all participants

RESEARCH COMPANY: Laterite Ltd.

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATION: Right to Play

AFFILIATED GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION: Rwanda Education Board

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is _____. Welcome to this Semi-Structured Interview and thank you so much for making the time to join us today, we really appreciate it. We are from Laterite, a data collection and research company based in Kigali, and we have been asked by the NGO Right to Play to write a report about teachers' experiences with the Learning through Play E-learning and certification course. If you have been able to share an email address or whatsapp number, we would be happy to share the final report, although it will be in English.

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RISKS

There is no risk of harm to you during your participation in the research.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study, but your opinions and insights will be used to help Right to Play develop or improve its E-learning and certification course delivered through both online and in-person means, to foster the use of Learning through Play in the classroom.

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PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to respect your privacy and keep your answers confidential, we will not share any personally identifiable responses with persons who are not members of the research team. No personally identifiable information or any information that can be identified with you will be published. The information you will share will be safely stored on Laterite's secure servers and only professional research staff from Laterite Ltd. and programme staff from Right to Play will have access to this information.

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate and understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Respondent - Print Name:

Respondent Signature:

Date (Day/month/year):

My signature below shows that I voluntarily agree for the audio-record of the SSI guides.

Respondent Signature:

Pilot Design Study Semi-Structured Interview Guide - Right to Play E-learning and certification Project

Objective: Right To Play is designing, building, and piloting a blended teacher training program on delivery of the Competence-Based Curriculum through play for lower primary teachers in Rwanda. The goal of this semi-structured interview is to understand the experience and challenges of School-Based Mentors with providing support to teachers with the E-Training and Certification project. In particular, the interviews seek:

- To understand respondents' experiences and potential challenges with offering support on Learning through Play, or on any new approaches if they have never supported on Learning Through Play
- To gather respondents' suggestions on how to support teachers with the CPD course during Communities of Practice
- To understand how school leaders can best support teachers and School-Based-Mentors with the respect to the CPD course

Format and participants:

- 4 Semi-Structured Interviews, each with one of the School-Based Mentors involved in the alpha stage of testing the CPD course
- Up to one hour and 10 minutes
- Moderator and notetaker equipped with 4 pads of A1 flip chart paper, a few packs of marker pens, a few packs of colourful post-it notes

Format:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)
2. Theme 1: Providing support on the training and Learning through Play (30 minutes)
3. Theme 2: Communities of Practice (25 minutes)
4. Theme 3: Support from school leadership (20 minutes)

SSI GUIDE

2. Introduction

5 minutes including introductions

Welcome to this Semi-Structured Interview, and thank you so much for making the time to join us today, we really appreciate it. We are from Laterite, a data collection and research company based in Kigali, and we have been asked by the NGO Right to Play to write a report about teacher training through education technology and your experience with the CPD course, called a “pilot design study”. If you have been able to share an email address, we would be happy to share the final report, although it will be in English.

Right to Play is designing a blended teacher training programme for primary school teachers in grades P1 to P3, about how to do more to incorporate “Learning through Play” into their classroom practices and to deliver the Competence-Based Curriculum. The goal of this interview is to understand the experience and challenges that School-Based Mentors are facing in providing support for the training. The feedback that you give us is very important and will be used to improve the design of this blended training.

Before we dive into our discussion, could you please introduce yourself? Please tell us your name, position, school and district. We are asking your position so we can better understand the context. All the personal information you share here is confidential, and nothing you say can be traced to you as an individual through our research.

2: Providing support on the training and Learning through Play

30 minutes

1. Introductory question – what do you teach? How long have you been in the school? How do you typically engage in COPs?
2. What kind of preparation do you think you need to provide support to teachers to understand and apply Learning through Play in the classroom?
 - a. Please describe to what extent you feel prepared for this task. Have you ever taken any trainings in Learning through Play? Have you supported teachers to integrate Learning through Play in the past?
 - b. How easy do you think it will be for teachers in your school to understand what is included in the course, and what type of support will they require?
 - c. What about to apply it in the classroom? What type of support will they require?
3. What kind of preparation do you think you need to support teachers with accessing and attending the online course?
 - a. Have you taken an online course before? Have you provided support with online courses before? Please describe to what extent you feel prepared for this task.
 - b. What are some of the areas where you need further clarity or support, and why?
4. Do you need any other guidance, preparation or tools to help you to effectively support teachers to access, attend and apply the course? Please provide examples.

3: Experience with Communities of Practice

25 minutes

5. As part of the project, we plan on carrying out COPs on a bi-weekly basis, and providing SBMs with a COP manual to guide teachers through these sessions. What is your experience in using this type of support in the past?
 - a. What went well, and what did not go so well?
 - b. Is there any further support you might need?
 - c. For this course, we are developing a CoP Guide. What would you like to see in this Toolkit? What would be most helpful for you to support teachers?

6. In your view, in what ways can Communities of Practice be effective in supporting teachers with **new and innovative** methods, including Learning through Play, and with completing the course, and why?
 - a. Do you have any specific experience from past COPs (also on other topics beyond Learning through Play) you would like to share?
 - b. Please provide examples on what worked and what did not work so well in your past experience. *Probe: What could be done during COPs to give teachers the support they need?*
7. In general, what kind of support (**other than COPs**) that you provided in the past has been helpful for teachers to adopt new approaches? What has been useful in shifting their mindsets and convincing them that the new approach was useful?
 - a. Are there any specific channels other than COPs that teachers are using for learning (such as Whatsapp groups, or any resources)? Which ones could be useful to support them on Learning through Play?
8. Would you like to add anything else on the support would you expect to provide on Learning through Play and the E-training platform during Communities of Practice, and on any potential barriers you foresee?

4: Support from school leadership

20 minutes

9. In your school, what has been school leadership's attitude towards TPD in general? What about for more innovative methodologies? Have school leaders shared any thoughts on this course so far?
 - a. Do you think there could be any potential challenges brought by school leaders that could make accessing and attending the course harder? What could be done to address those challenges?
10. What are school leaders' existing attitudes to Learning Through Play in your schools? To what extent do you expect them to be supportive of this course?
 - a. Do you think there could be any potential challenges brought by school leaders that could make implementing Learning through Play in the classroom more difficult?
 - b. What do you think we should do to best engage with school leadership? What could be helpful to make sure that they support teachers with Learning through Play?

11. Is there anything you would like to add, that we have not spoken about? Do you have any questions for me?

- Thank you for your valuable participation! -