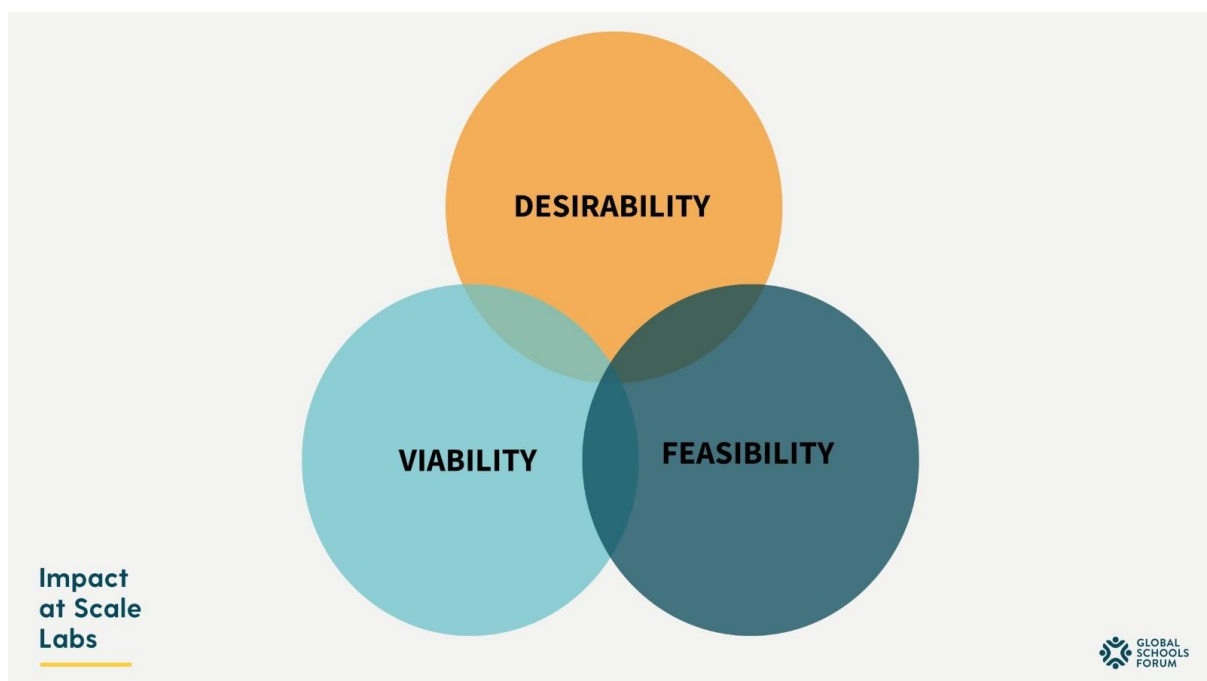


## Testing and Adapting Education Innovations for Scale: Insights from GSF's Impact at Scale Labs

### Abstract

Education practitioners in low- and middle-income countries often grapple with a lack of access to the monitoring, evaluation, and learning approaches and tools to support them in implementing impactful solutions at scale.

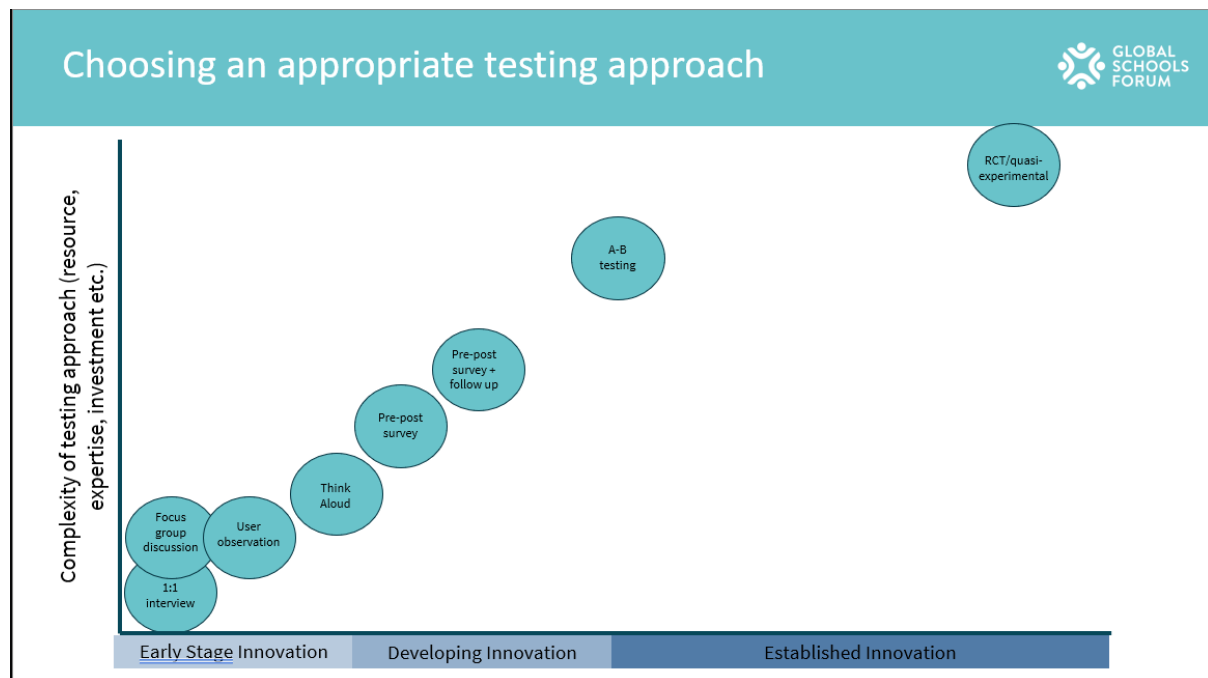
The "Impact at Scale Labs" program by Global Schools Forum (GSF) supports locally led education solutions through strategic support and focusing on evidence generation. The Labs is designed on the foundation of the Desirability, Viability, Feasibility (DVF) framework. These three components are the keys to scaling successfully. GSF first utilises the DVF framework to identify solutions that have the potential to scale their impact, then uses the DVF framework as a guide and tool to support organisations in strengthening their three key components.



The journey to scale for every innovation and organisation is different. Each innovation will have a different rate of adoption and different needs and challenges that they will be faced with. For the Impact at Scale Labs, GSF has partnered with Laterite to support each individual organisation in recognising their unique needs, resources, and context, and helping them to develop effective practices to scale through adaptive testing. This presentation will focus on the different pathways to testing and adaptation for impact at scale. It will discuss the Labs' experience with supporting organisations in identifying where they are in their innovation journey, and which testing approaches are most appropriate and useful for their current stage.

For early-stage innovations, we find that using approaches that have low levels of complexity and risk to answer key questions around the desirability of their innovation is most appropriate. For example, conducting interviews with head teachers to identify

if they would buy-in the product or focus group discussions with teachers to identify if the solution would be suitable in their environment. We will showcase the example of Sabre Education, a Labs 2023 participant, who utilised information from a scoping study of private kindergarten schools in Ghana to guide their scale strategy.



However, once an innovation is more established, it is possible to introduce more intensive approaches with a focus on impact on outcomes. For example, the introduction of A-B testing to learn which iteration of an innovation achieves the greatest engagement or learning change. We will showcase the example of a Labs (2023) participating organisation, Dignitas, who used an A-B testing approach to identify optimal interventions for enhancing teacher engagement and teaching quality in Kenya. They implemented a three-arm test comparing the LeadNow app alone, combined with coaching, and paired with Professional Learning Communities, aiming to pinpoint the most effective and cost-efficient strategies. We argue that RCTs or quasi-experimental designs are most appropriate once the organisation has a high level of confidence in the version of the innovation they are implementing.

The session concludes with five key findings:

1. Learning culture: Embedding a "design, test, learn" approach is a cultural shift, as well as a technical shift, which requires buy-in and championing from leaders.
2. Consider your resources: "Design, test, learn" can be intensive and requires resources and capacity, in both MEL teams as well as design and implementation teams.
3. Data for Decisions: Identify which decisions need to be made to progress the innovation's impact and scale and use this to prioritise what to test, otherwise testing can become overwhelming.
4. Data Flows: Don't forget your 'traditional' monitoring – many approaches rely on having reliable, meaningful monitoring data.

5. Non-linear Journey: Choosing your testing approach is not linear. Reflections on the learnings from one test should also inform the decision about what and how is tested next.

This presentation thereby utilises insights from a research-practitioner collaboration to discuss pathways to testing and adaptation for impact at scale, leading to strengthened educational innovations as well as more robust evidence generation with higher generalizability and adaptability.

*More on Impact at Scale Labs: [Impact at Scale Labs | Global Schools Forum](#)*

*More on Laterite: [Laterite - data collection and development research in Africa](#)*