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Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

DIALS Survey Report

Background & Key Findings

*Schools/K-12 DIALS
Research Team*

Sept 2023



DIALS

Democratic, Inclusive & Authentic
Assessment for Learning & Sustainability

Assessment for Learning & Sustainability

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Background & Objectives



DIALS

Democratic, Inclusive & Authentic
Assessment for Learning & Sustainability

Assessment for Learning & Sustainability

Project Background

The **DIALS** research project has the ambitious objective to support teachers when moving away from more formal assessment models that are based on summative testing, and towards a more democratic, inclusive and authentic formative assessment approach.

This approach would allow students to “*show potential outside of formal exams*”, “*put in practice what they have learned and give them an additional sense of achievement*”, and allow teachers to use assessment results to “*differentiate lessons to suit their needs*”.

As part of the early stage research in this project, **we conducted a survey to gather feedback from teachers** on how they currently conduct assessments. The key findings of this survey are contained within this report.

Survey Aims & Objectives

- ❖ Understand how primary & post-primary teachers develop assessments, and how likely they are to use **authentic** real-world activities.
- ❖ Identify which technology & tools they have incorporated with **learning** purposes into their assessment design & activities that makes their approach more effective, efficient and **sustainable**.
- ❖ To what extent they involve their students in these activities making assessment more **Democratic & Inclusive**.



Survey Methodology



DIALS

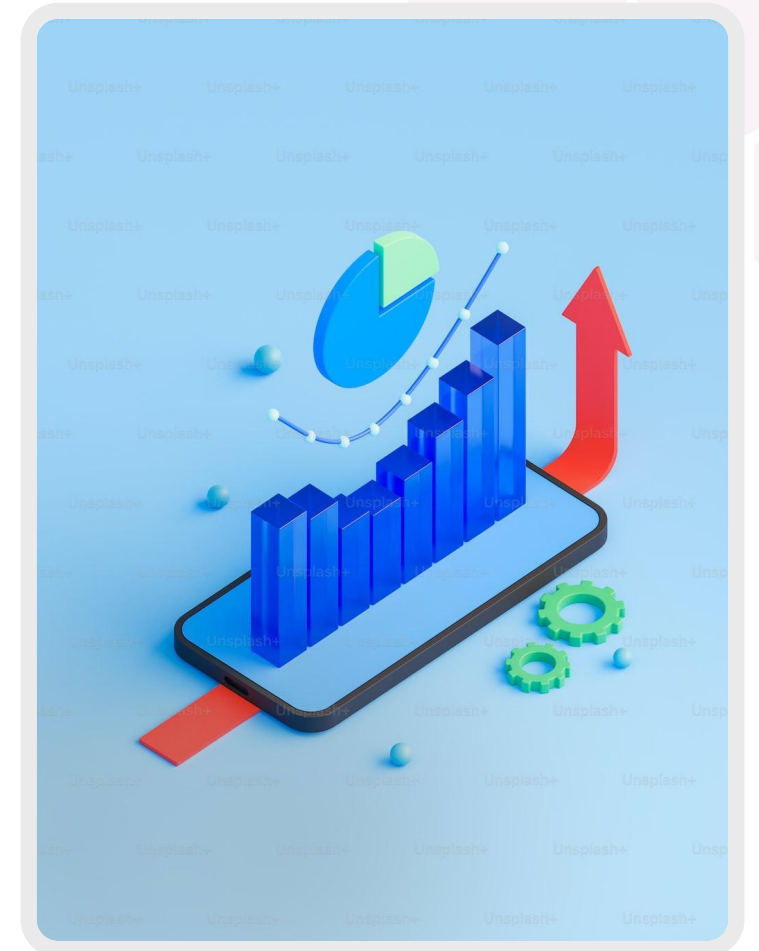
Democratic, Inclusive & Authentic
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Survey Methodology

Survey Design

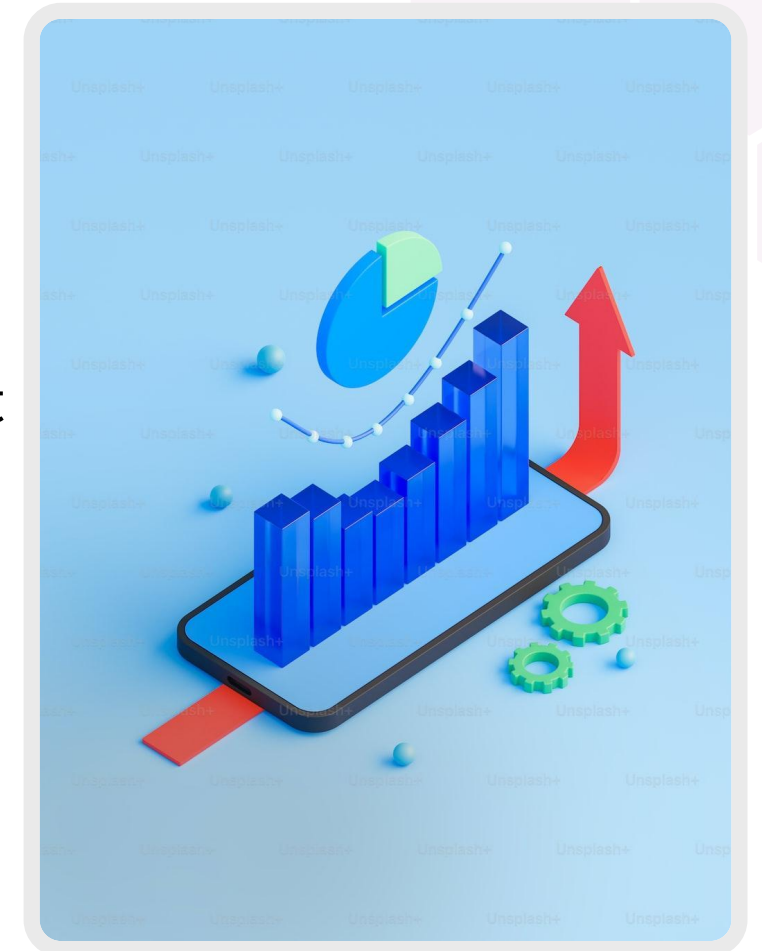
- ❖ The survey consisted of 28 questions made up of a range of multiple choice, free text and scaled-response questions on Google Forms.
- ❖ Learnovate developed the survey in collaboration with the DIALS Research Working Group (RWG).
- ❖ Teachers were recruited using RWG connections & social media posts, and consented to participate.
- ❖ The survey was made available to participants for 4 weeks, following a pilot with a small number of teachers in Ireland, the USA, and Spain.
- ❖ Participation in the survey was on an anonymous basis, with participants requested to only provide contact details if they agreed to participate in follow up research (43 teachers agreed to participate in follow-up research)



Survey Methodology

Survey Design

- ❖ The Authentic exploration section of the Survey was inspired by Schultz, M., Young, K., Gunning, T., Harvey, M. (2022). Defining and measuring authentic assessment: a case study in the context of tertiary science.
- ❖ Another research work by Sokhanvar, Z., Salehi, K., Sokhanvar, F. (2021). Advantages of authentic assessment for improving the learning experience and employability skills of higher education students: A systematic literature review informed us about the exploration of Core Skills.
- ❖ NCCA Assessment Guidelines and a Framework for Junior Cycle in Ireland informed the learning methods, assessment approaches and types of activities.



Survey Methodology

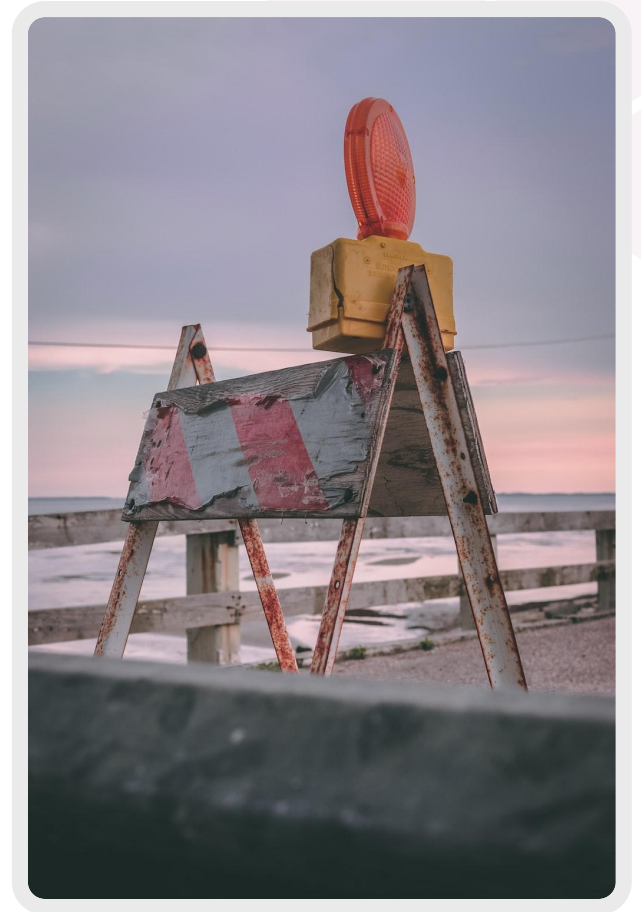
Data Analysis

- ❖ Learnovate approached the data with the aim of providing a deeper level of analysis that would go beyond the insights already available from Google Forms.
- ❖ One key aspect of this analysis was a focus on the qualitative data captured by the survey through the use of open-ended questions.
- ❖ The coding of the qualitative data was conducted manually in order to most accurately extract the insights that it contained.
- ❖ Each individual response was read, analysed and manually added to the relevant thematic area & quantitative analysis conducted to generate relevant visuals/graphs.

Survey Methodology

Limitations

- ❖ Question 6 contained the option of ‘reading and writing’ as a subject choice. This may have received a high percentage as reading and writing forms a part of many other subject areas, particularly in primary education.
- ❖ The survey was entirely in English, so that may have led to some participants in non-English native countries disregard the survey or misunderstand some questions.
- ❖ While it was our intention to reach more primary than secondary school teachers, as primary school was the initial focus of our DIALS research, the proportion of secondary teacher respondents was higher than that of primary teachers. However, this is useful data in order to compare the experiences of both primary and secondary level teachers.



Key Findings



DIALS

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Key Findings

Demographic Profile



Typical Respondent Profile:

Role: Secondary School Teacher

Location: Ireland

Experience: >10 years

Subjects: Reading & Writing, Maths, Social Studies

Class Size: 21 or more students

229

Responses to
the survey

84% have >10 years experience & work with classes of **21 or more students**

Assumptions:

- Insightful data expected due to the experience of the respondents (>10 years).
- Challenge of implementing a DIALS framework in large classroom sizes.

Key Findings

The Importance of Assessment

As the data says, assessments form a crucial part of the learning process, especially when they are used with the aim of Monitoring progress, Checking levels, Gaining insights and Identifying gaps.



Monitoring
students' progress



Checking
understanding levels



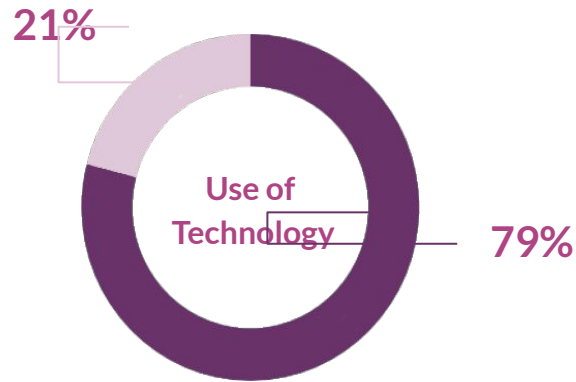
Gaining
insights for lesson
planning



Identifying
strengths & weaknesses
to personalise learning

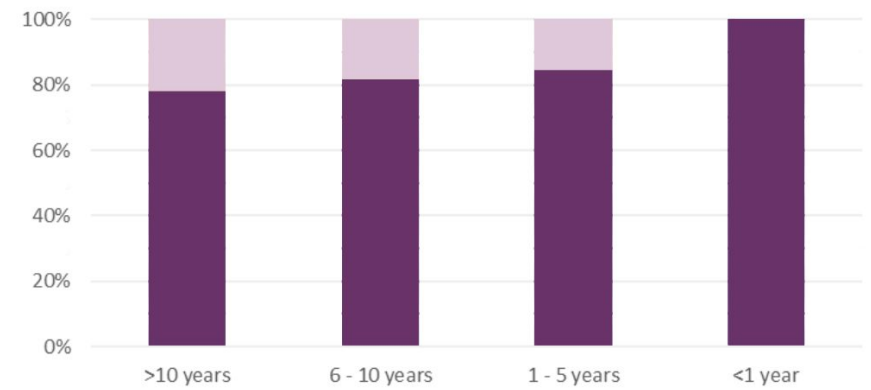
Key Findings

Use of Technology



- **79%** of teachers use technology for assessments.
- **Used less frequently** in subjects like Maths or Physical Science.

- **Drop in Use to 6.5%** among teachers with 10+ years experience.
- **Teachers' Concerns:** Distractions, drawing focus from learning, slow internet connections.

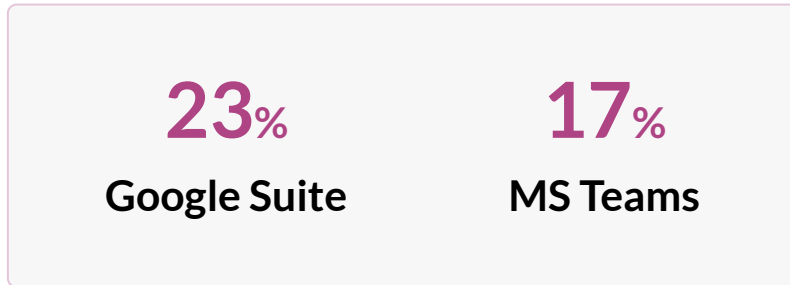


Use of Tech vs Experience

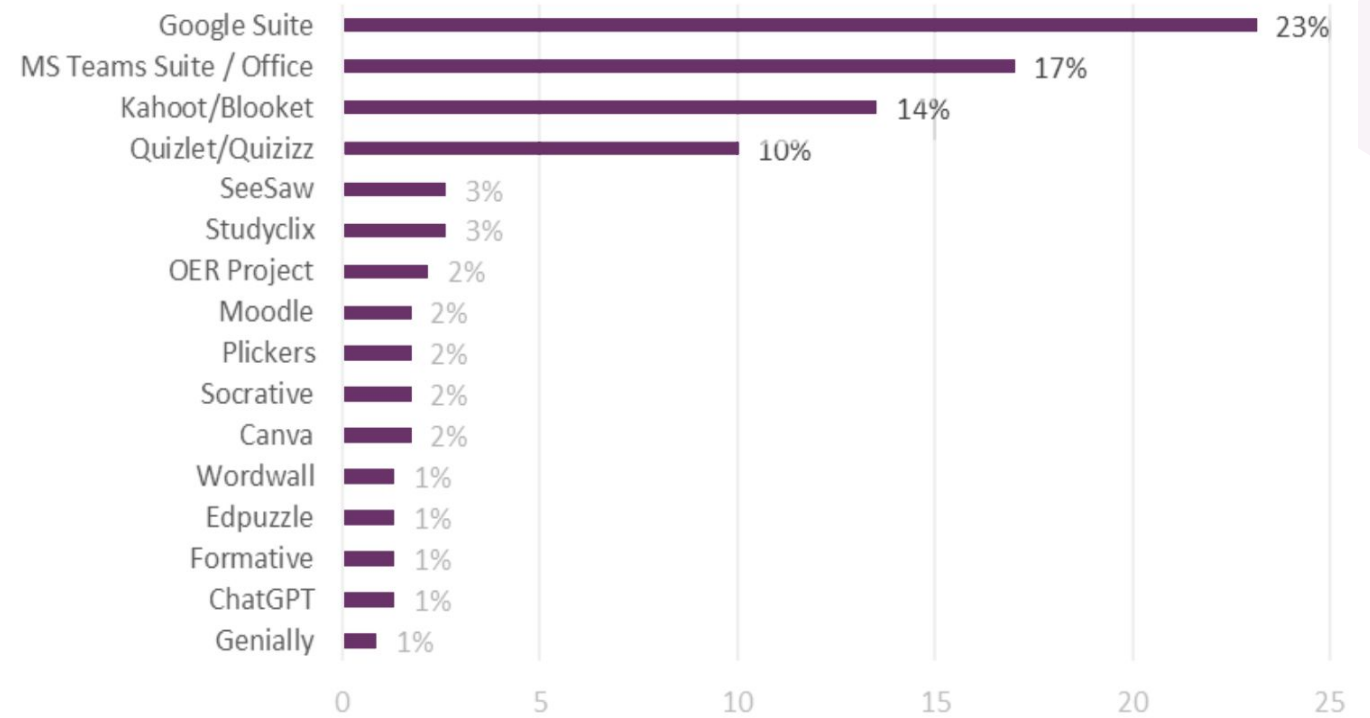
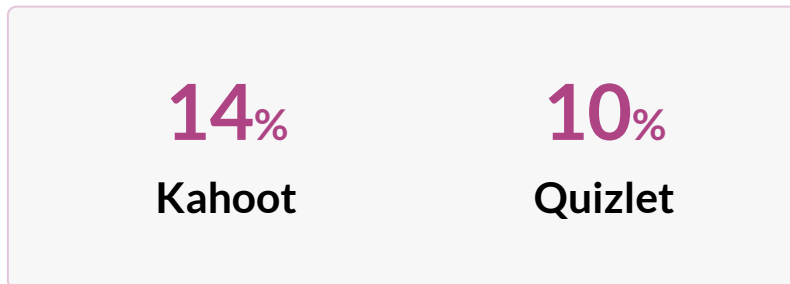
Key Findings

Use of Technology

Classroom & Document Management:



Engaging Formative Testing Tool:



Most used Tech tools

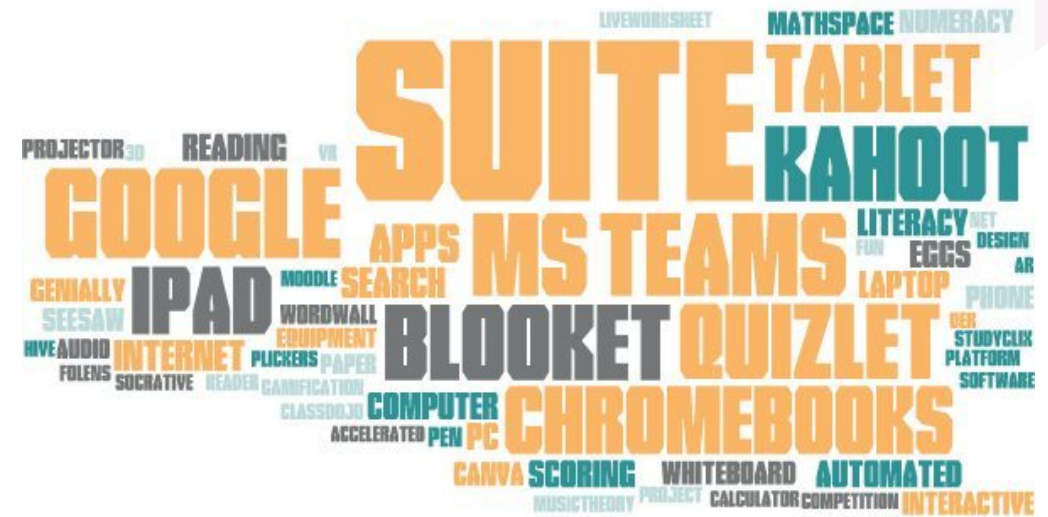
Key Findings

Use of Technology

Teachers also explore other tools such as:

- SeeSaw for portfolios creation.
- Plickers and WordWall to conduct revisions.
- Plotagon for scenario interviews.
- Revision Assistant AI for instant feedback.
- ChatGPT as an AI support for assessments and classroom management.

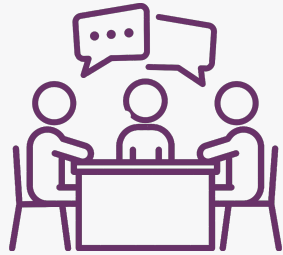
It is clear that teachers highly value tech for collaboration, primarily using **G Suite**, **MS Teams**, **Moodle**, and **Flipgrid**.



Key Findings

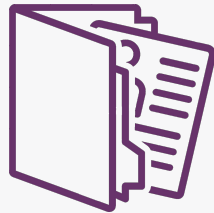
Use of Different Methods

Stage 1 of this project said that **group work**, **ePortfolios** and **self/peer-assessments** are closer to what we can call 'authentic assessment'. According to the survey, their frequency of use varies:



Group Work:

- Regularly used & favoured by teachers.
- Decrease in use in secondary schools, possibly due to time constraints.
- **Challenges:** constraints in time, resource and managing student groups.



E-portfolios & Journals:

- Less common overall.
- More frequent in subjects like Art.

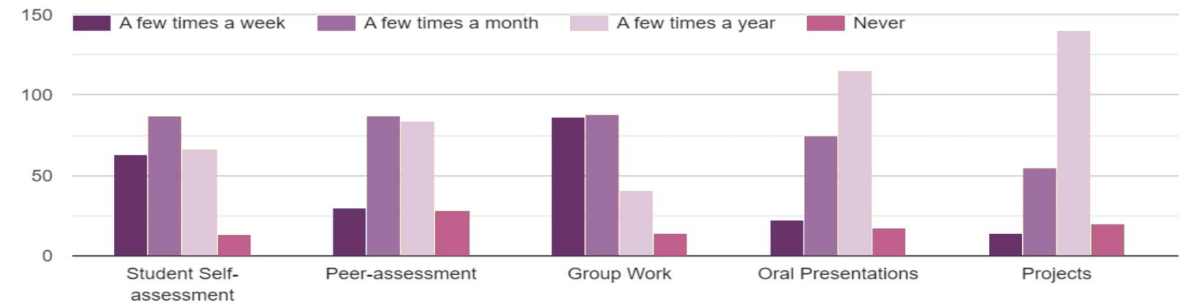
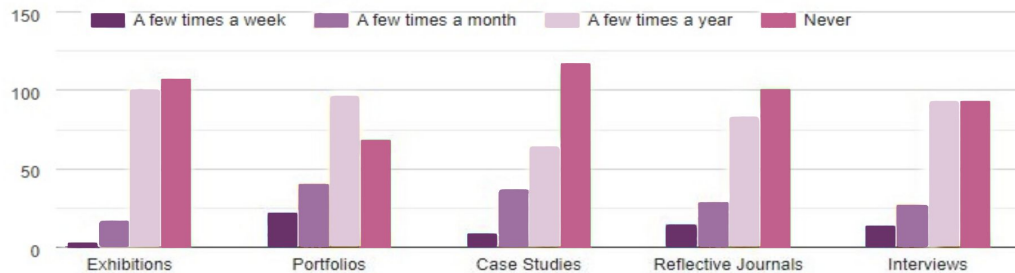
Key Findings

Use of Different Methods



Self/Peer assessment:

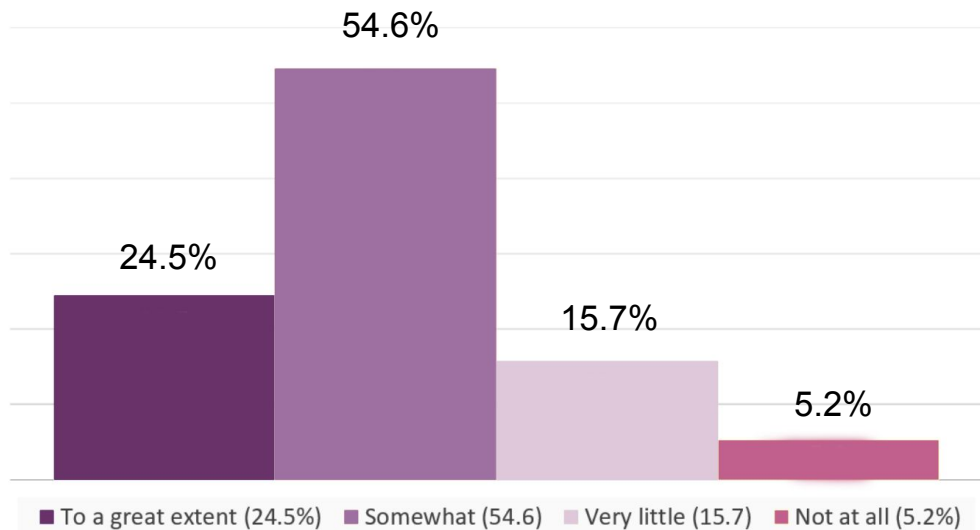
- Not widely adopted due to:
 - Teachers' distrust in the process.
 - Extra training & instruction needed for students.
- More prevalent at secondary level (students from age 12 in Ireland).
- Self-reflection: A valued component in assessments for many teachers.



Key Findings

Assessment Design

80% of teachers integrate real-life scenarios in assessments, making learning more relatable and practical.



User of Real-world Context in Assessments (%)

Assessment methods used:

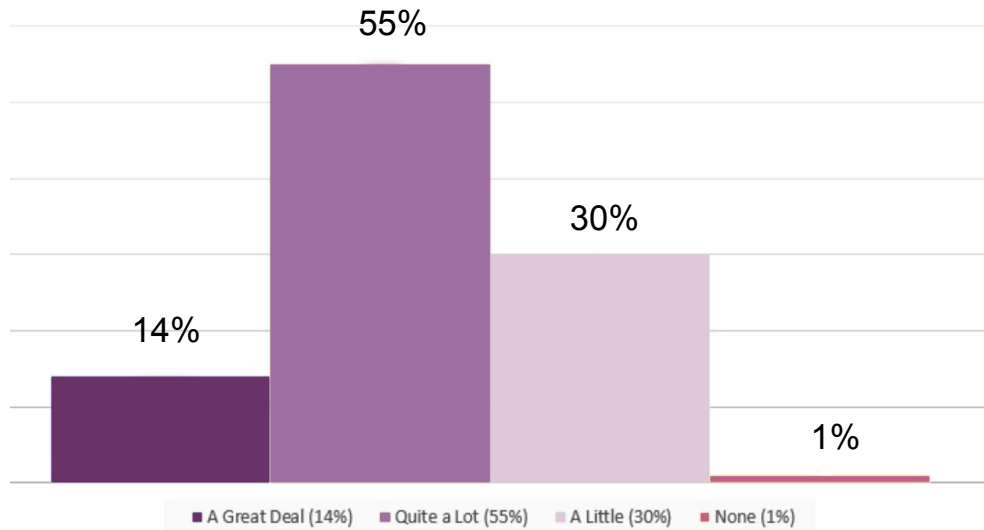
- Role-playing.
- Collaborative arguments.
- Outputs tailored to students' interests & real-life contexts.

Designing assessments by:

- Collaboration with teachers and engaging in online forums for better assessment designs.

Key Findings

Assessment Design



Perceived Time Designing Classroom Assessments (%)

30% may not invest enough time in designing assessments.

Proper design demands **time & resources**, a challenge for many educators.

Key Findings

Assessment Design

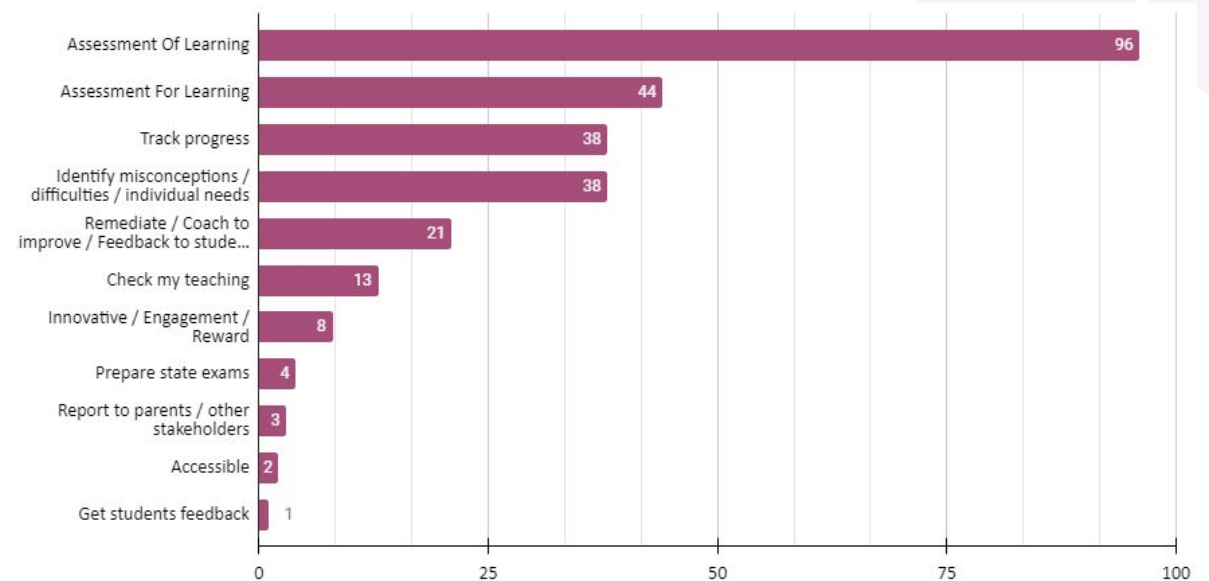
- Over **40%** of teachers revisit their assessment process at least once a term.
- **20%** align with an 'assessment for learning' approach, hinting at an inclination towards democratic & sustainable assessment methods.

Reasons for Assessments:

- Tracking progress.
- Checking understanding.
- Gauging student status and future learning requirements.

Opportunities with DIALS:

- Responses indicate potential for widespread adoption of the DIALS model.
- Teachers' ideas can enrich and enhance the DIALS approach.



Most important reason for conducting assessment

Key Findings

Inclusive and Democratic Assessment

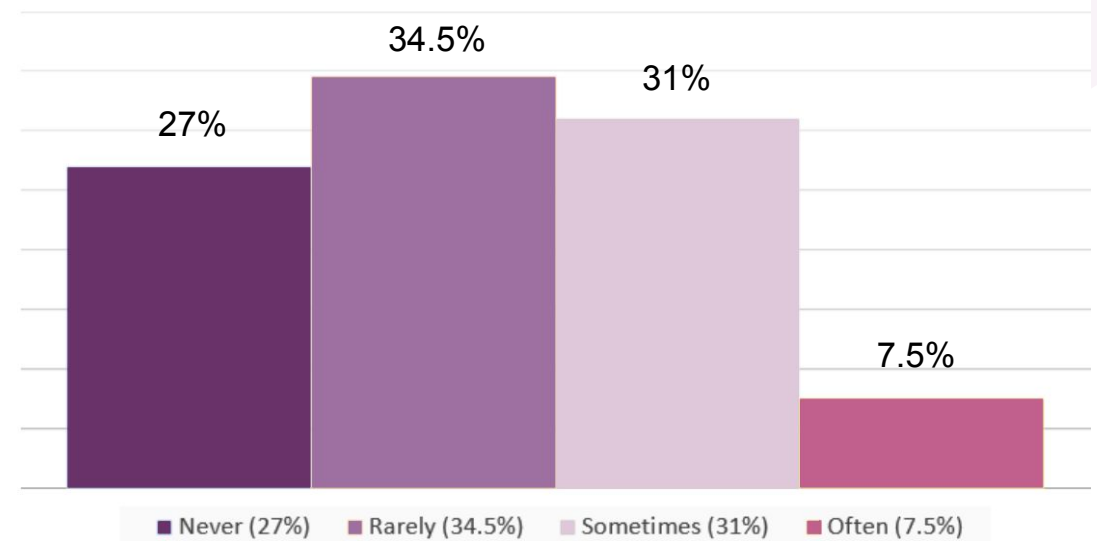
Teachers underscore the value of student self-reflection and critical assessment from a young age.

Beliefs & Practices:

- Active student participation in assessment review and design is essential.
- The goal is for students to take ownership of their learning and assessment journey.

Enabling Self-reflection:

- Seen as a key enabler.
- Teachers work to weave self-reflection activities into the curriculum.

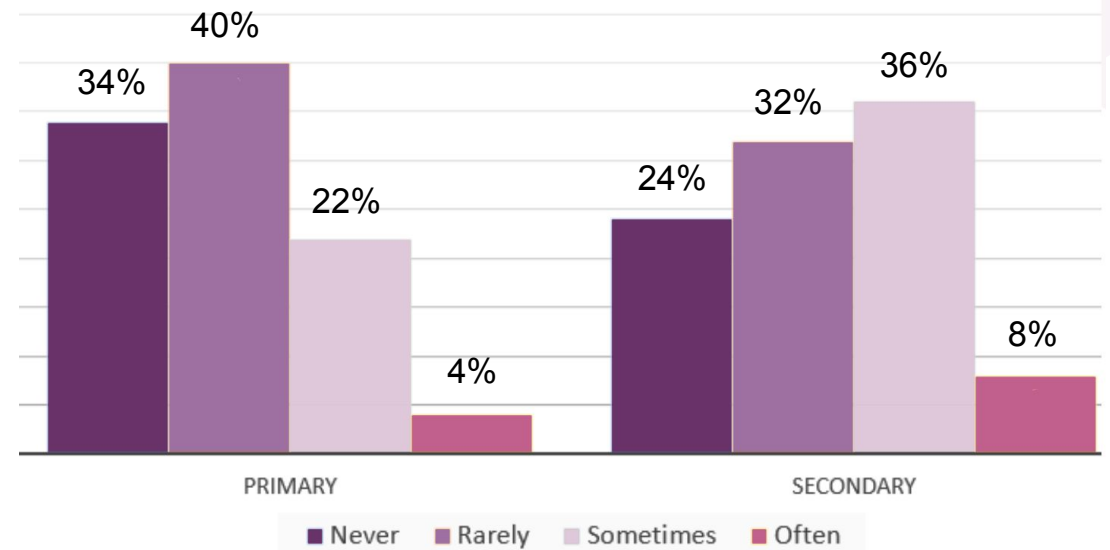


Frequency with which you involve students in assessment design and choice (%)

Key Findings

Inclusive and Democratic Assessment

44% of teachers in **Secondary Schools** (from age 12 in Ireland) regularly involve students in the assessment design and implementation, while this figure **drops to 26%** for **Primary Schools**.



Comparing Student Involvement between Primary and Secondary

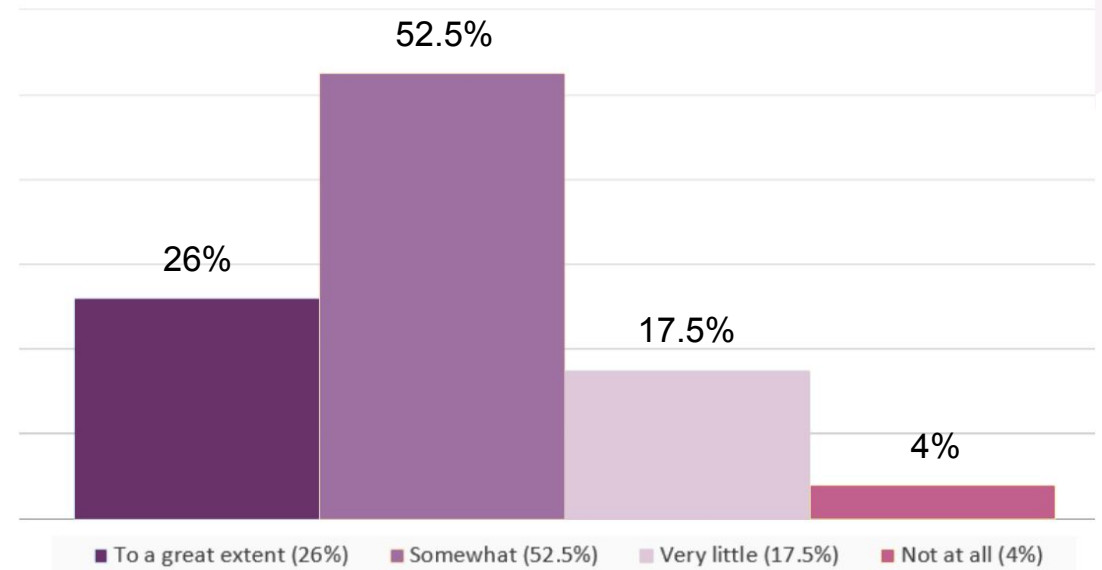
Key Findings

Inclusive and Democratic Assessment

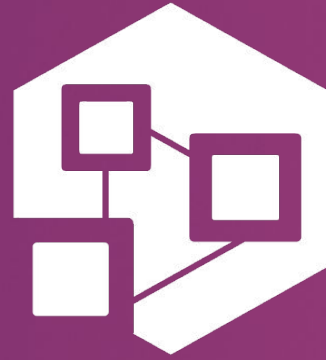
Over **75%** of educators design assessments to foster **transferable** and **21st century skills**.

Highlighted Skills:

- Team-work
- Problem solving
- Social skills



To what extent do you incorporate the teaching of transferable skills?



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