Teacher assessment practices in South African schools?

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Purpose of presentation

- **To share results of study conducted with SA teachers on their assessment beliefs, practices & needs**
- **To develop a strategy, informed by evidence, for implementing a computer based classroom assessment sytsem in our schools**

Acknowledgements

- **Dr Cedric Croft,**
- **Dr Yusuf Sayed &**
- **HSRC research team**

Background

- **Working with Ministry of Educatio to develop and pilot an integrated national and classroom assessment system to support information needs of policy makers and teachers**
  - **National Assessment of Learner Achievement – Grade 9 - policy makers**
  - **Computerised classroom assessment system – teachers**

TARMII

- **Teacher Assessment Resources for Improving Instruction**
- **Provide teachers with high quality curriculum relevant tests on demand**
- **Diagnostic information on learner performance**
- **Ideas for intervention**

Effect on implementation

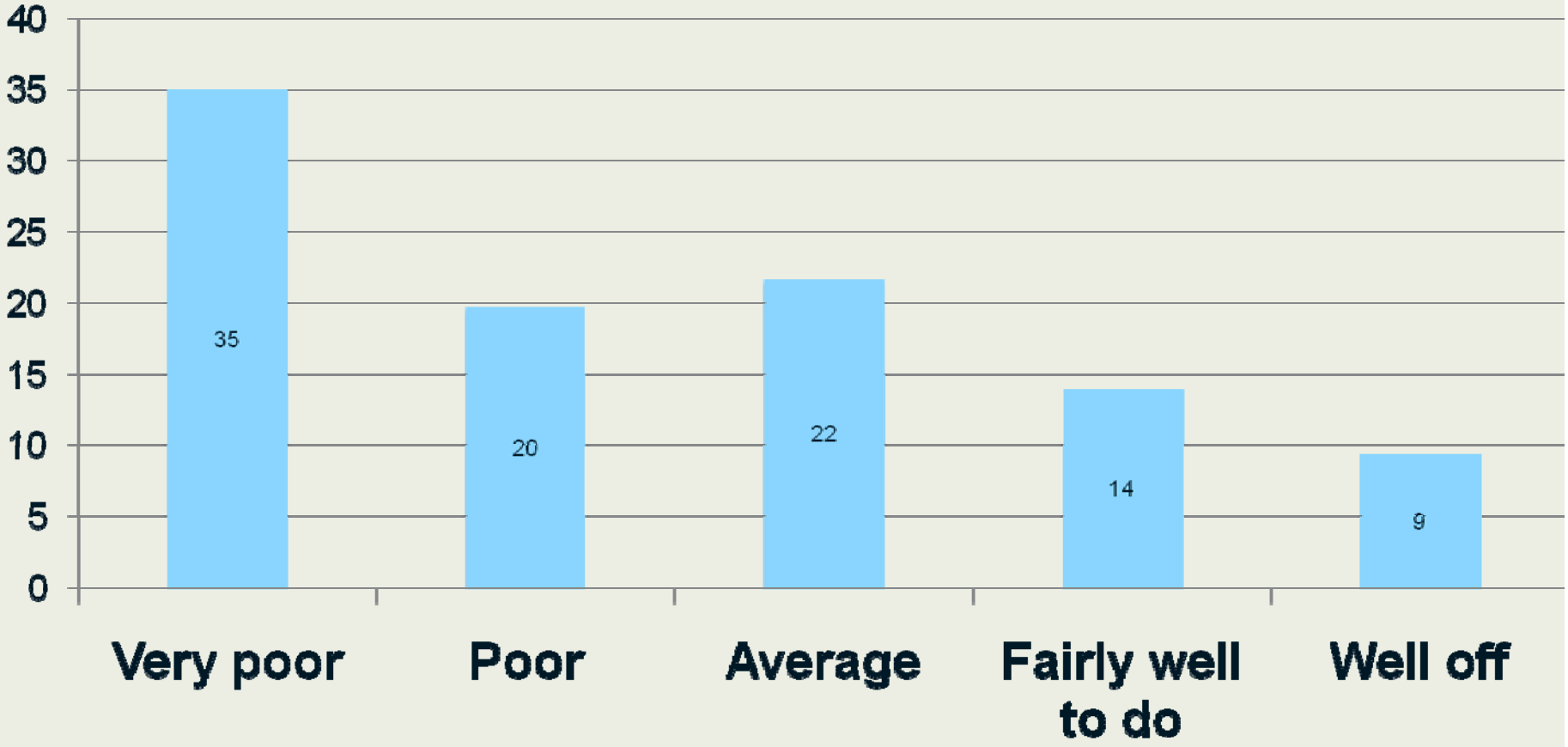
Given large range of differences in schools ito:

- **Resources & facilities**
- **Teacher experience and expertise in assessment**
- **Access to and use of computers**

Design

- **National survey – random sample pf 269 schools**
  - **Teacher questionnaires - 629**
- **Site visits**
  - **Interviews - 30**
  - **Observations - 30**
  - **Document review - 30**
  - **Questionnaires - 115**

School sample (%) by poverty quintile



Quintile 1 school

Quintile 5 school

Key questions

- What are teacher beliefs and understanding of assessment?
- What is the level of teacher preparedness and available support for the use of assessment?
- What is the nature of teacher assessment practices
- What are the key assessment problems facing teachers? and
- How do teacher use computers to support their assessment practices?

Teacher beliefs and understanding

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Use of assessment

- 58% of teachers agreed that classroom assessment was easy to implement & 9% disagreed (34% were unsure),
- Most teachers also agreed that classroom assessment was too time consuming (45%) while 30% disagreed and 25% were unsure.

Importance of assessment

Strong belief in importance of assessment

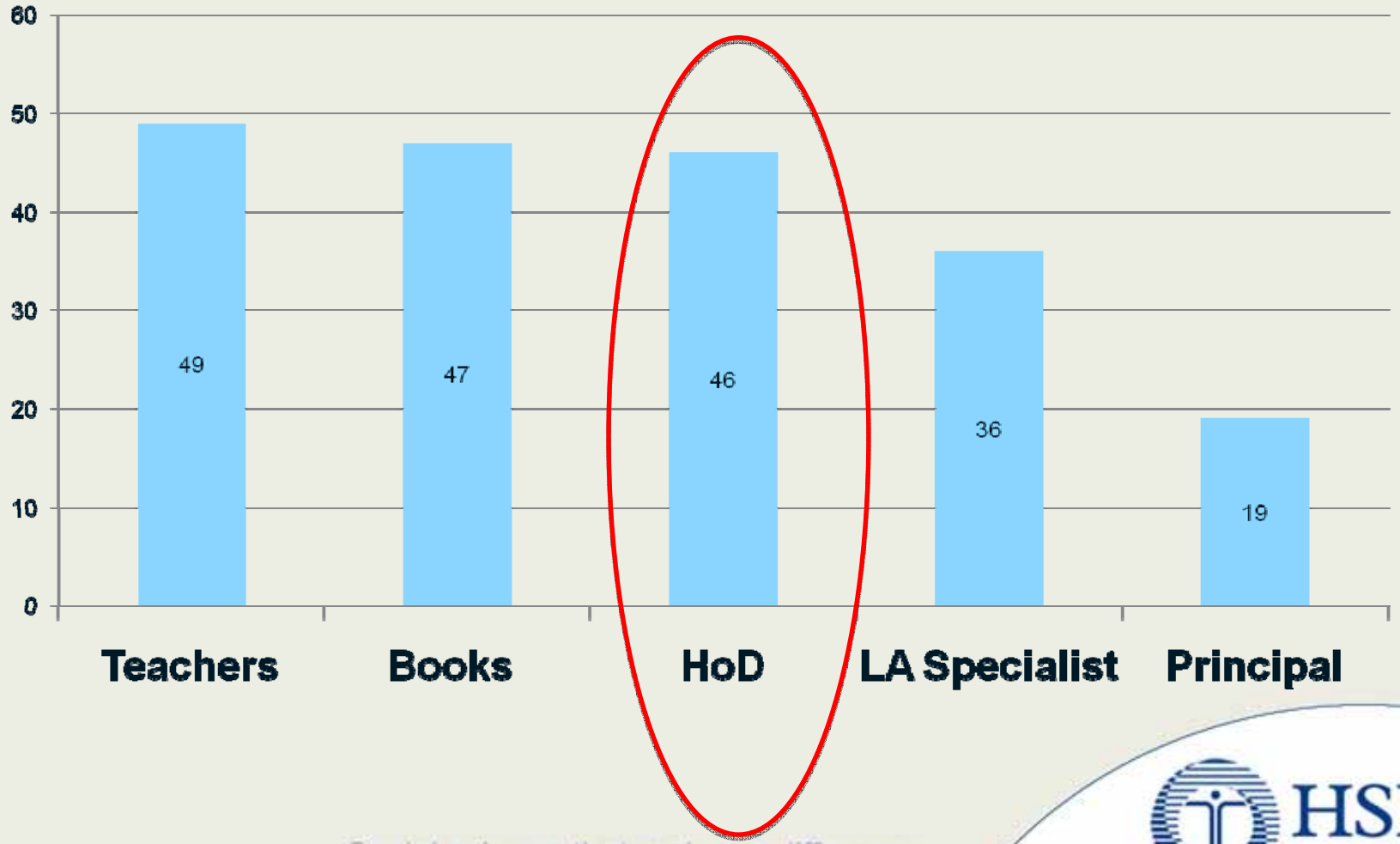
	Crucial	Important	Limited importance	Not important
Assessment criteria discussed with learners	28	51	18	3
Assessment of learner's work mainly in the form of comments	13	45	32	10
View learner mistakes as learning opportunity	25	59	15	1
Assessment of learner's work mainly in the form of marks	12	55	23	10

Analysis of interviews

- Greater involvement of parents 25 teachers (83%).
- The best uses of assessment are to improve learner performance - 11 teachers (37%).
- 5teachers (17%) noted that continuous assessment was suitable for both formal and informal assessment.

teacher preparedness and available support

Sources of additional information on assessment



Interviews

- Support by HoD reported by 27 teachers (90%) - HoD's visiting classrooms, providing feedback - weekly or at least once a term.
- Regular Phase meetings - 19 (63%)
- 7 (23%) - principal playing a similar role, but with less frequent visits.

Interviews

From outside the school the picture of the support offered was quite fragmented.

- Support from Learning Area Specialists (district) from the district office – 6 teachers (20%),
- However, 17 teachers (57%) - visits from District officials were yearly / irregular or had not taken place
- Support from cluster meetings, workshops by NGOs or the DoE and partnerships with other schools were stated by between two (7%) and four (13%) respondents respectively.

Teacher assessment practices

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Who develops the tests?

Mainly by teachers themselves

Item formats typically used

Mainly open ended questions

Cognitive demand of tests developed

Mainly knowledge application questions

Frequency of techniques applied

Regular use of classwork, projects & homework

	Class tests	Classwork	Projects	Homework	Assignments
Once a term	2	1	1	8	13
Once a month	13	0	61	4	25
Twice a month	11	4	4	7	12
Weekly	34	21	7	50	12
Daily	3	72	2	26	6

Frequency - recording of results

Majority – weekly or monthly recording

Frequency and use of results

	Feedback to learners	Diagnose learning problems	Group learners	Report progress to parents	Assign extra homework	Evaluate curriculum coverage	Evaluate teaching methods
Rarely	**4**	**4**	**8**	**0**	**16**	**6**	**4**
Sometimes	**20**	**37**	**52**	**16**	**58**	**21**	**38**
Always	**76**	**59**	**40**	**84**	**26**	**73**	**57**

Document review & interviews

- No evidence of useful comments in learner notebooks or teachers records
- Essentially for this group of South African teachers classroom assessment is seen as a relatively formal process of recording marks for class work, or some other summative indicator of performance in the classroom.
- The broader meaning of classroom assessment seems not to have been adopted.

Frequency & type of teacher comments

Limited evidence of relevant comments to Improvement in support learning

Assessment problems facing teachers?

Interviews – key problems - 1

- National assessment policy was seen as unclear or confusing by 9 teachers (30%) and involved too much paper work for six (20%)

- However, these views are balanced out by 9 teachers who described the national policy as satisfactory.

Interviews – key problems

Time related issues – major problem

- Portfolios and peer assessment for 6 respondents (20%),
- 7 teachers (23%) - **ALL** assessment activities takes up too much time.
- 4 teachers (13%) that assessment detracts from learning time.

"There is a lot of paper work with lots of repetition and teachers are interested in teaching and cannot teach because of lots of recordings. The recordings take a lot of time, which is supposed to be devoted in actual teaching. There are a lot of things that need to be assessed which are not necessary .." (School 7, Grade 4, Teacher Interview: 08-10-2008)

Access to and use of policy docs

Majority have access but do not use documents

Use of computers

Teacher use of computers

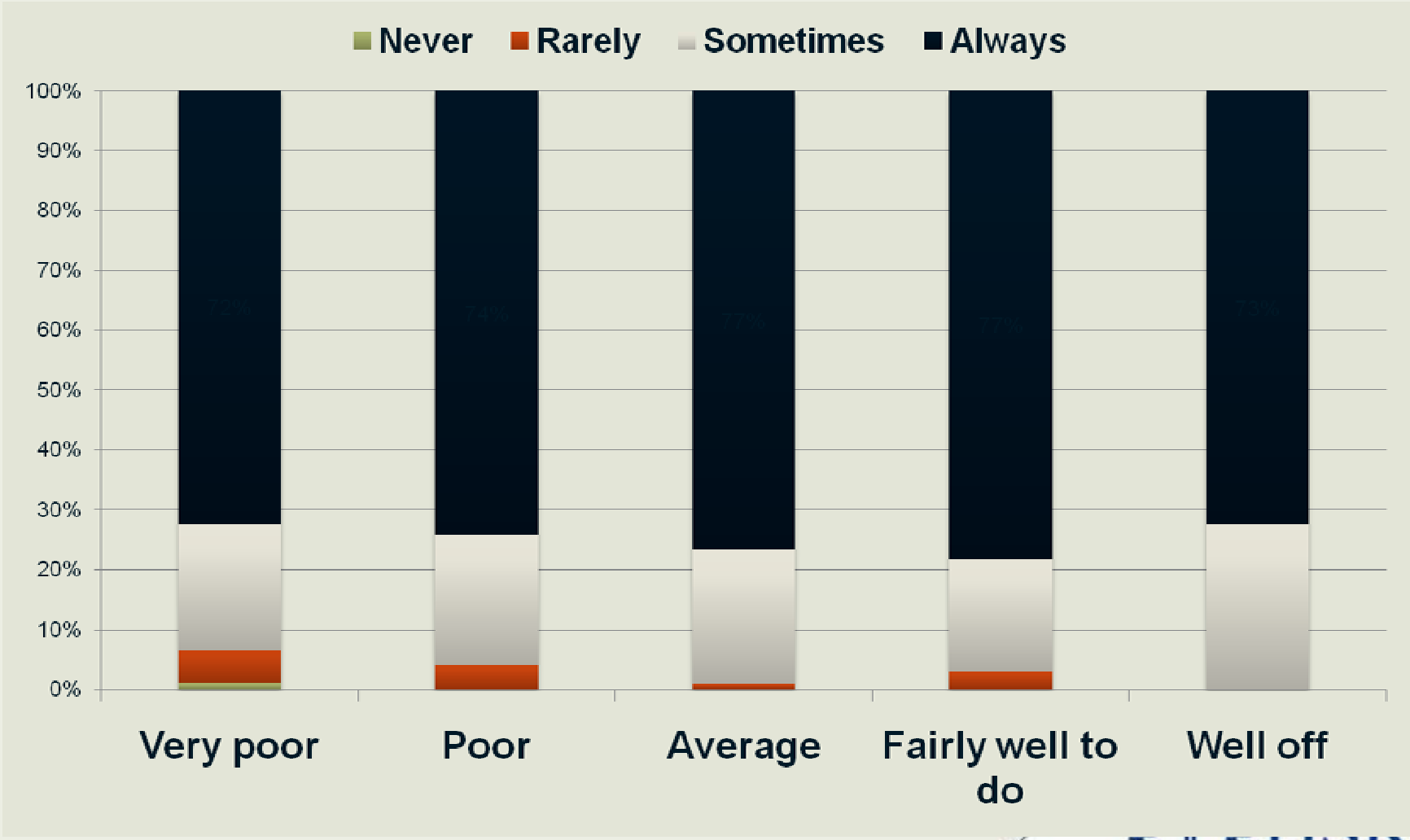
Use of computer for assessment

Use of computers for:	%
Writing reports	83
Keeping records	79
Developing class tests	73
Lesson planning	51
Classroom presentations	32

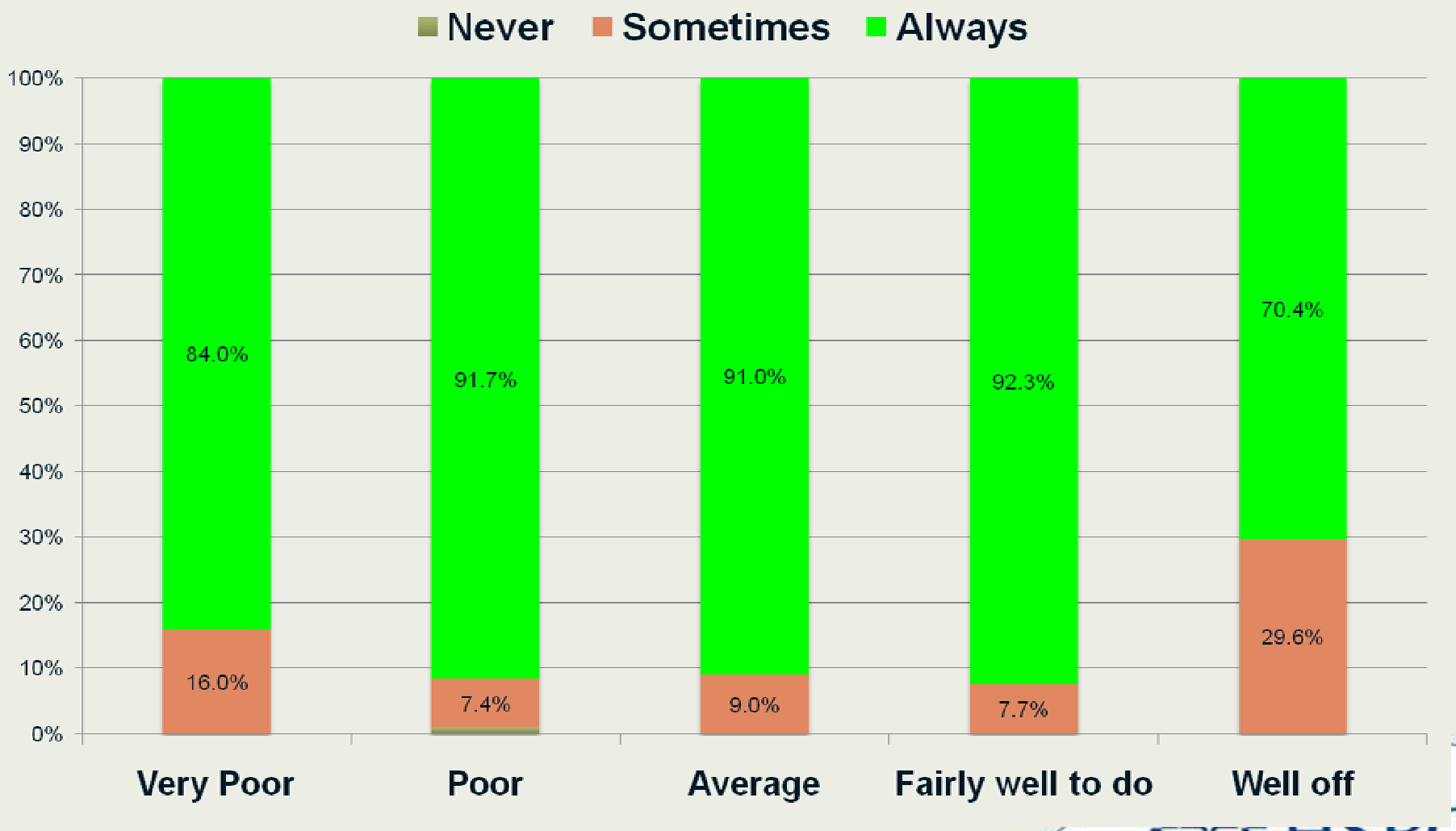
Results by quintiles

- **Small to no** differences between "good" and "poor" schools wrt to their assessment practices

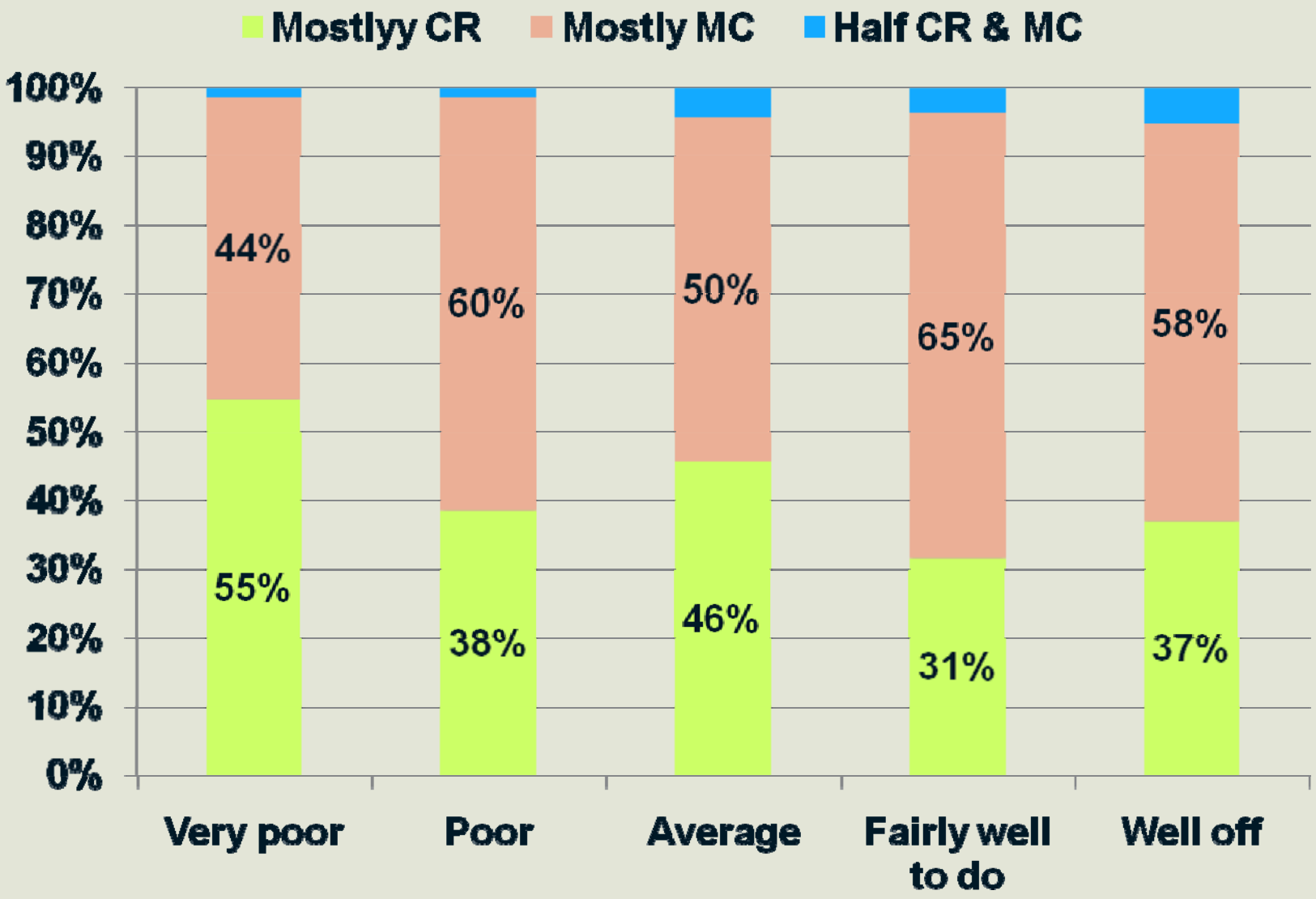
Use for feedback by Quintile



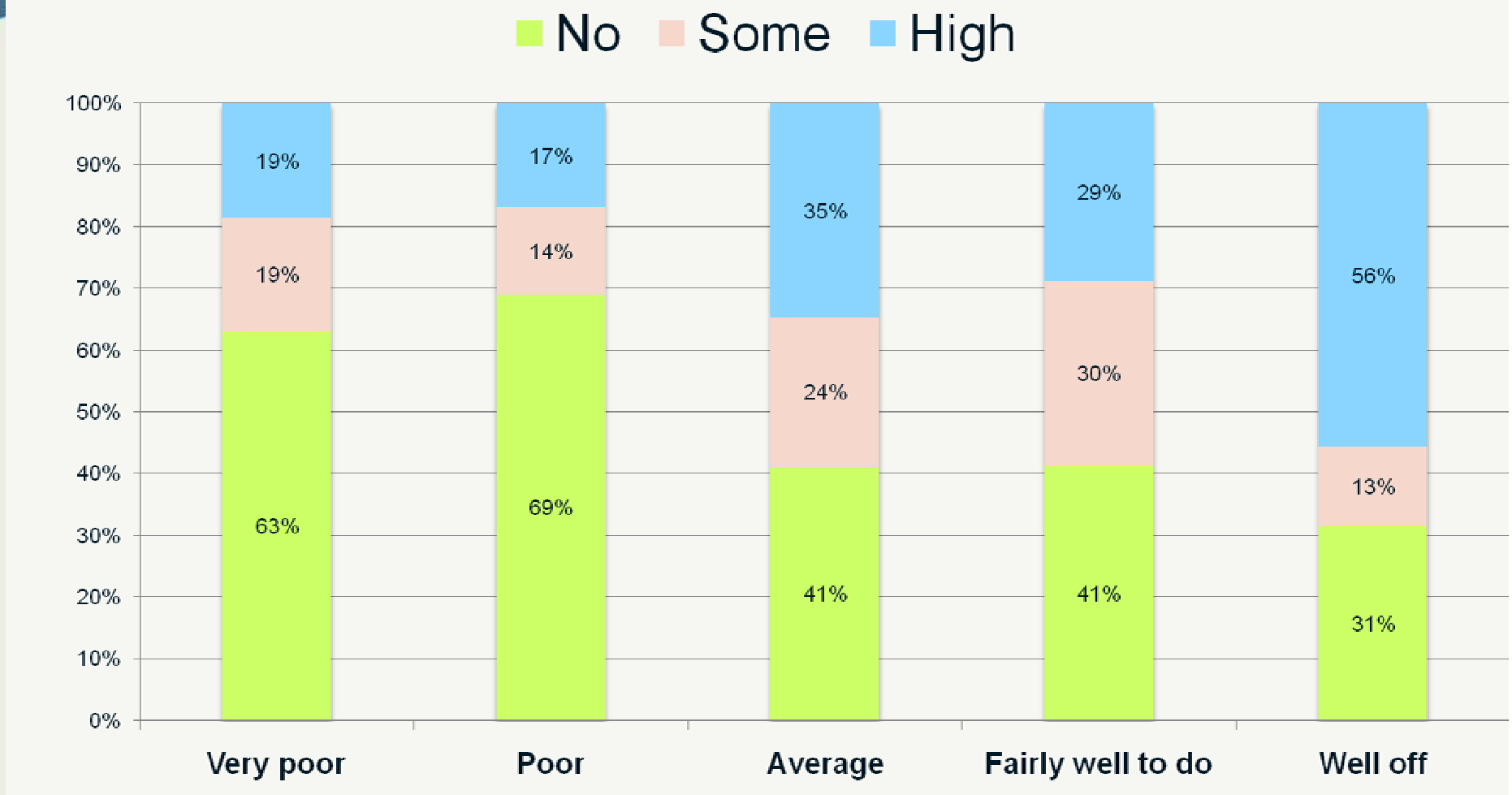
Frequency – use of class test



Items types mostly used in class tests



Computer use by Quintile



Diff due to access to computers

Implications - 1

- Introducing the TARMII system in a manner that is aligned to, or enhances, the support systems and structures that currently exist for teachers across **all quintile categories**

- Extending teacher practice of the use of assessment from merely the recording of marks to:
  - identifying learner strengths and weaknesses, and
  - providing relevant feedback for improving learning

Implications 2

- Ensuring that teachers fully understand
  - the purpose and added value of the TARMII system,
  - that the system is fully aligned to the National Curriculum Statements and
  - can be readily integrated into their regular learning and teaching activities,

- Enhancing teacher skills and confidence in the use of computers for improving their assessment practices

Implications - 3

- Clearly demonstrating the value of the TARMII system in **reducing teacher workloads** with regard to:
  - producing high quality curriculum aligned classroom tests on demand
  - providing a mechanism for recording leaner scores for use in monitoring learner progress over time,
  - ensuring that the reports produced provide relevant information for teachers to identify leaner needs and to obtain ideas on how to address these needs, and
  - provide teachers with opportunities to review their teaching practices

Implications - 4

- Involved other teachers
  - Use of cluster meetings & support structures

- From school management – involved HoD in project implementation

Next steps

- Randomised control trials to determine impact of the computerised systems on teaching practice and learner performance
  - Begin in January 2010
  - 200 schools
  - 4 provinces

- Results available in early 2011

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Assessment & use of ICT

Teacher assessment practices