



Directorate for Quality and Standards in
Education

Quality and Assurance Department
Report of Outcomes of One Day Reviews Carried out
Between January and December 2019



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Introduction	5
Section 2: The internal review process and school development planning.	9
2.1 General overview:	9
2.2 Analysis of Criteria (Internal Review and School Development Planning)	11
Data Gathering:.....	11
SWOT and Prioritisation:.....	12
SMART Action plans:.....	13
Implementation:	14
Monitoring and Evaluation:	14
2.3 Strengths and Areas for Development	15
Strengths:.....	15
Areas for Development:.....	15
Section 3: Learning and Teaching	17
3.1 General Overview:.....	17
3.2 Analysis of Criteria:.....	17
Relationships conducive to learning:	17
Session Development:	18
Addressing learner variability:	19
Learner engagement:.....	20
Use of digital technology:	21
Reflection upon learning:.....	22
Integrated Assessment Practices:	23
3.3 Strengths and Areas for Development	24
Strengths:.....	24
Areas for Development:.....	24
Section 4: Conclusion	26
4.1 Internal Review and School Development Planning	26
4.2 Learning and Teaching and Assessment.....	27

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Schools reviewed using the one-day model by sector	6
Figure 2: Kindergarten Schools' overall score.....	10
Figure 3: Primary Schools' overall scores.....	10
Figure 4 Secondary Schools' overall scores	10
Figure 5: Data Gathering.....	11
Figure 6: SWOT and Prioritisation.....	12
Figure 7: SMART Action Plans	13
Figure 8: Implementation	14
Figure 9: Monitoring and Evaluation	14
Figure 10: Relationships conducive to learning.....	17
Figure 11: Session Development	18
Figure 12: Addressing Learner variability	19
Figure 13: Learner Engagement.....	20
Figure 14: Use of Digital Technology	21
Figure 15: Reflection upon Learning.....	22
Figure 16: Integrated Assessment Practices.....	23
Figure 17: Overall Scores for Internal Review and School Development Planning	26
Figure 18: Overall scores for Learning and Teaching.....	27



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Malta became a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals in 2015. This agenda highlights an urgent call for action by all countries for strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth while tackling climate change. SDG4, in particular, focuses on Quality Education with the goal to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. This goal is reflected in the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta (2014-2024).

In 2015 the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) which from now onwards will be referred to as Education Review Section (ERS), started planning for the development of its Quality Assurance Framework with the final intention of diversifying its external review models. Over the years, the whole week external review had been established as a robust and well accepted review model. However, it limited the regularity with which reviews were being carried out and jeopardized consistent school improvement. Following extensive reflection and discussion it was decided that in the long run the whole week model needed to be accompanied by another review model which would allow a more regular presence in schools. Following consultation with relevant major local stakeholders as well as different European inspectorates and advisors, in January 2019 the ERS extended its range of review models by launching the one-day review model to complement the current whole school model.

Throughout the process of development of the one-day review, the ERS focused on maintaining the developmental stance which it had nurtured over the years through its various interactions with educational institutions and professionals in the field of education. Moreover, it was fundamental to keep on working towards reaching the objectives of the National Quality Standards¹ which guide schools in addressing the Ministry for Education (MFED) current policies and set vision which guide both the ERS and schools towards improvement.

The objective of the one-day review is to gather a valid and reliable overview of the school's core business, namely:

- The internal review process and school development planning; (Educational Leadership and Management)
- (Learning and Teaching) and Assessment as part of the learning and teaching process

During the one-day review, evidence towards the evaluation of these standards is collected through meetings with relevant stakeholders such as the Senior Management Team (SMT), teaching staff and learners as well as through classroom observations. During observations, external reviewers give particular attention to how the school is tackling the learning and teaching priorities it has chosen to develop for its own improvement in the school development plan and how these priorities are being achieved. Following the visit, the school receives a Record of Outcomes focusing on these standards

¹ The National Quality and Standards in education can be found by following this link:

<https://education.gov.mt/en/qad/Documents/External%20Review%20Documentation/Standards%20and%20criteria%20Aug2016.pdf>

outlining the strengths and the areas for development. As of October 2019, a follow-up meeting is also being held with schools following the one-day review visit. This serves as professional dialogue to critically reflect and to discuss how these areas of development are or will be addressed by the school.

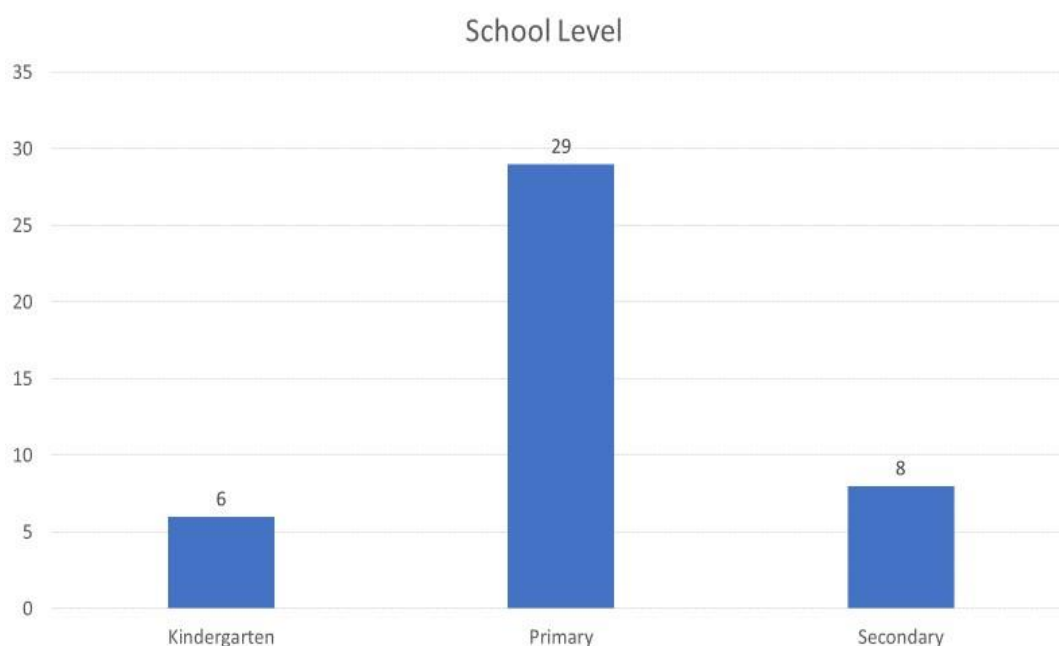


Figure 1: Schools reviewed using the one-day model by sector

During 2019, the ERS carried out 43 one day reviews in schools hailing from the state and church sectors. The state Primary Schools, which in most cases welcome learners ranging from Kinder 1 to Year 6, were reviewed most using this model during the first year. This was followed by 8 schools reviewed at Secondary level (including middle schools) and 6 schools which are standalone Kindergarten schools. The selection of schools was mainly based on the number of years since the particular school had been reviewed last. This was planned with the specific intention for schools to benefit from a review at least once every three or four years. When it comes to the independent sector, the QAD took into consideration the scenario present at that point and upon request it was agreed that these schools would not be included as part of the initial schedule. Moreover, a substantial number of independent schools had been reviewed through the whole school review model in recent years. Table 2 below shows the distribution of levels and sectors adopted during 2019.

Table 1: Distribution be level and sector for one-day review 2019

Level	State	Church
Kinder		6 (standalone)
Primary	27	2
Middle and Secondary	6	2

The following sections contains an analysis of the data obtained from lesson observations² as well as feedback included in the record of outcomes given to each school following the oneday review. The

² Lesson observation sheet can be found by following this link:

criteria shown in the tables below are based on an internal rubric³ focusing on the standard on internal review and school development planning as well as the criterion found in the lesson observations used by external reviewers during the one-day visit (key to observation sheet rubric found in table below):

Table 2: Key to observation sheet rubric

Key Level	Description
1	Does not meet expectation
2	Minimally acceptable
3	Good
4	Excellent practice

<https://education.gov.mt/en/qad/Documents/External%20Review%20Documentation/K1-Y11%20TL%20observation%20sheet%20one-day%20070118.pdf>

³ A sample excerpt of the rubric used by the QAD can be found as Appendix A of this report



SECTION 2: THE INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

2.1 General overview:

The processes of the internal review and school development planning are reviewed following five main criteria. The **'Data Gathering'** component looks at how schools gather their data as part of the internal review process. During the one-day review visit, reviewers discuss with the school's SMT, the different tools which have been used to gather data for internal review such as questionnaires with the different stakeholders, outcomes from lesson observations, staff meetings, meetings with parents and learners as well as other sources which the school might choose to use. This is done so as to evaluate how valid and reliable the data collected during the internal review process is.

The way the school analyses, interprets and uses this information is then tackled in the **'SWOT and Prioritisation'** section, which looks at:

- a. how school's internal review process is facilitating the choice of priorities,
- b. if these priorities target the real needs of the school,
- c. if this was carried out using a whole school approach.

This leads to the writing of **'SMART action plans'**. This particular criterion looks at the school's ability to really address its needs and devise plans for tangible improvement. The focus here is mainly on outcomes linked to the learning and teaching component and how the individual teachers are going to implement the chosen priority target actions in the classroom.

The last two components focus on **'Implementation'** and **'Monitoring and Evaluation'**. These are fundamental to the school as these are what will ultimately show that the priorities chosen have led to improvement within the classroom. The review looks at how educators are implementing the set targets in the classroom and what strategies the (SMT) is using to monitor and evaluate this implementation. All this is evidenced through several interviews carried out during the day with the Head of School, the Assistant Heads, teaching staff, learners as well as through the observation of the implementation of target actions during lessons.



Figure 2: Kindergarten Schools' overall score

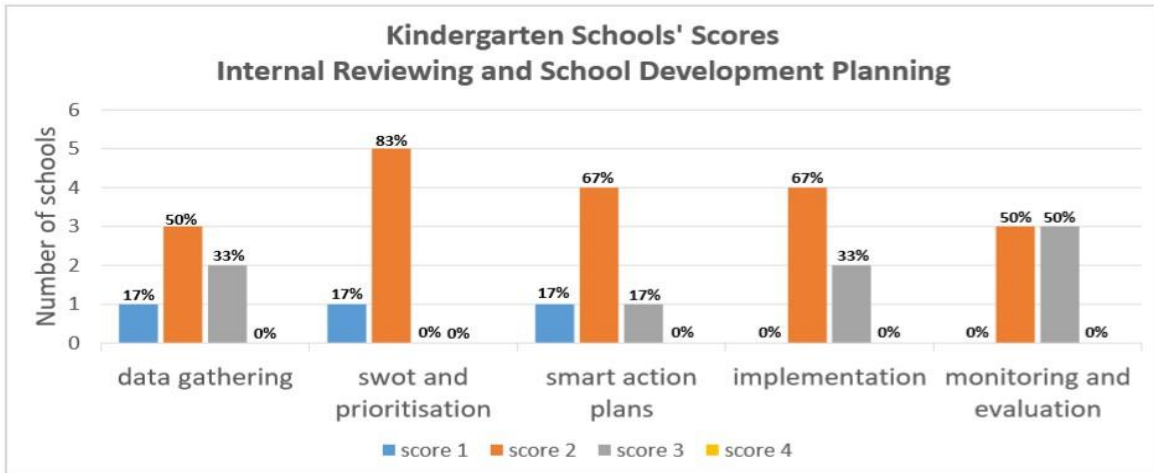


Figure 3: Primary Schools' overall scores

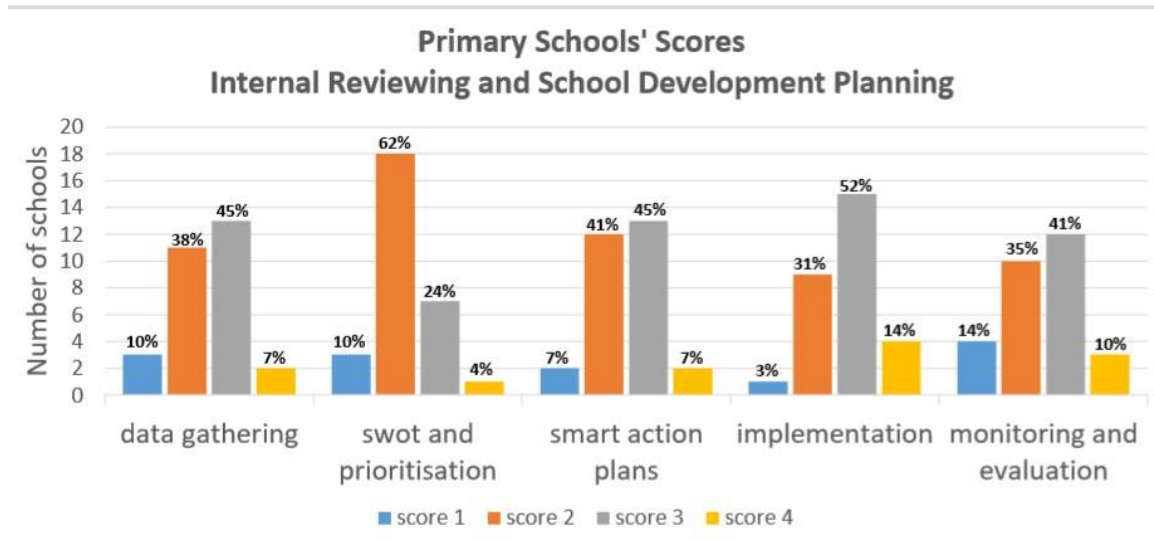
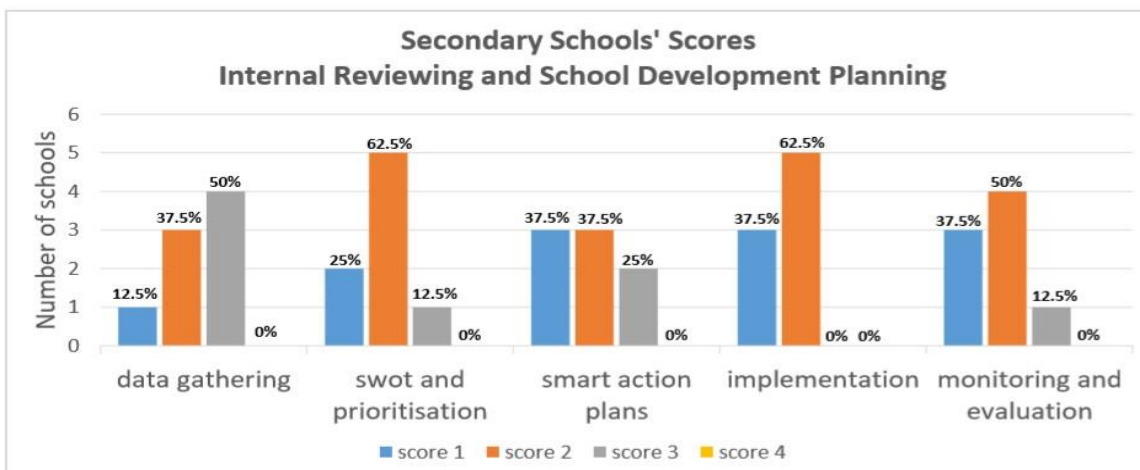


Figure 4 Secondary Schools' overall scores



Tables 4, 5 and 6 show the overall score for the different sectors across all criteria. These tables show that overall, within the internal review and school development section of the review, Primary schools are leading followed by Kindergarten schools and Secondary schools respectively.

2.2 Analysis of Criteria (Internal Review and School Development Planning)

DATA GATHERING:

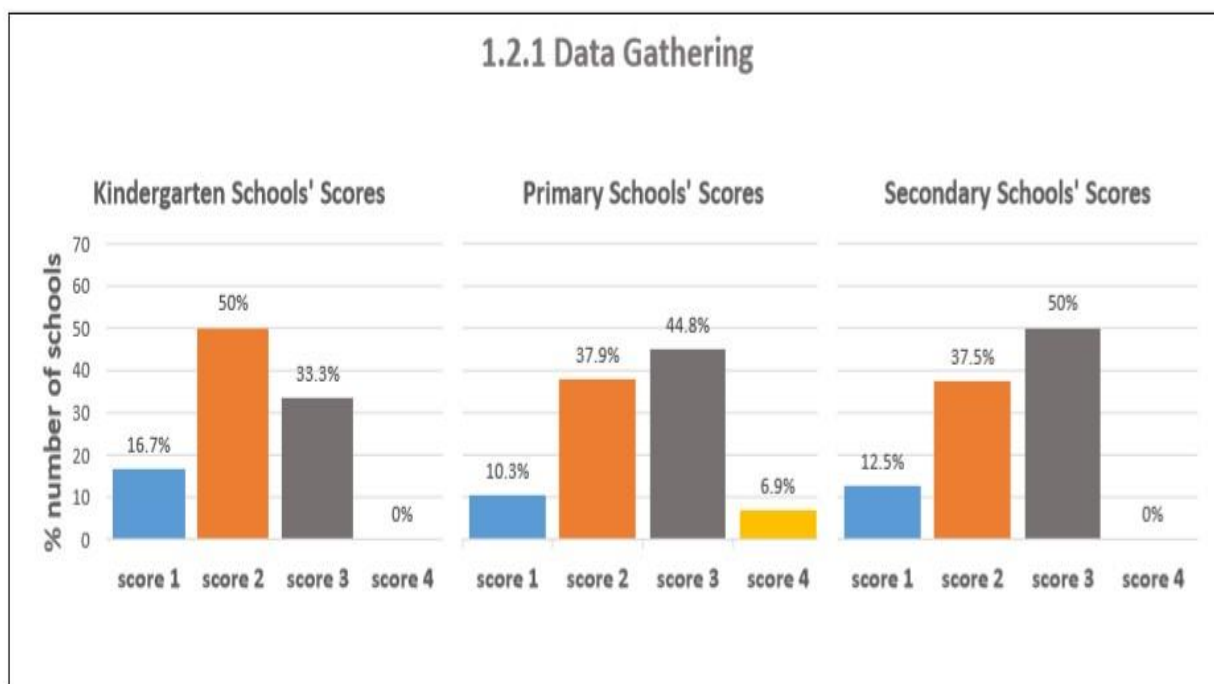


Figure 5: Data Gathering

When it comes to data gathering, statistics show that Primary schools scored the highest in followed by Secondary schools and standalone Kindergartens. An important improvement in this area is that most reviewed schools were observed to be aware of the need to gather data from all members of the school community.

The Record of outcomes indicate that in most cases the recommendations put forward when it comes to data gathering ask schools to include a more varied range of tools to gather data, as using one tool, usually questionnaires, might be limiting. The most frequent recommendation, especially at the Secondary school level, is the inclusion of the outcomes from lesson observations as well as the analysis of examination and assessment results.

Primary schools were often praised for using a variety of tools for data gathering and for including feedback obtained from curriculum time sessions as part of their feedback. This indicates that the teachers themselves, as well as the SMT, are using curriculum time as an integral part of school development and are regularly using this time to plan how to best integrate the SDPs action plans in their

daily practice. On the other hand, standalone Kindergartens, mainly hailing from the church sector, are still in the initial stages of becoming familiar with the internal review process and are still in the process of understanding how information gathered from the different sources available can be used effectively to strengthen this process. Most recommendations for this level, in fact, focused on the organisation of such a system so that in due time an internal review process which can cater for their context-specific needs can be developed.

The majority of recommendations in this area generally focus on guiding schools towards understanding the importance of strategically planning this phase of the internal review process. The suggestions by the review team, complemented with professional dialogue during the visit, focused on the use of different data gathering tools to obtain a clear picture of the school at that point in time without missing important factors.

SWOT AND PRIORITISATION:

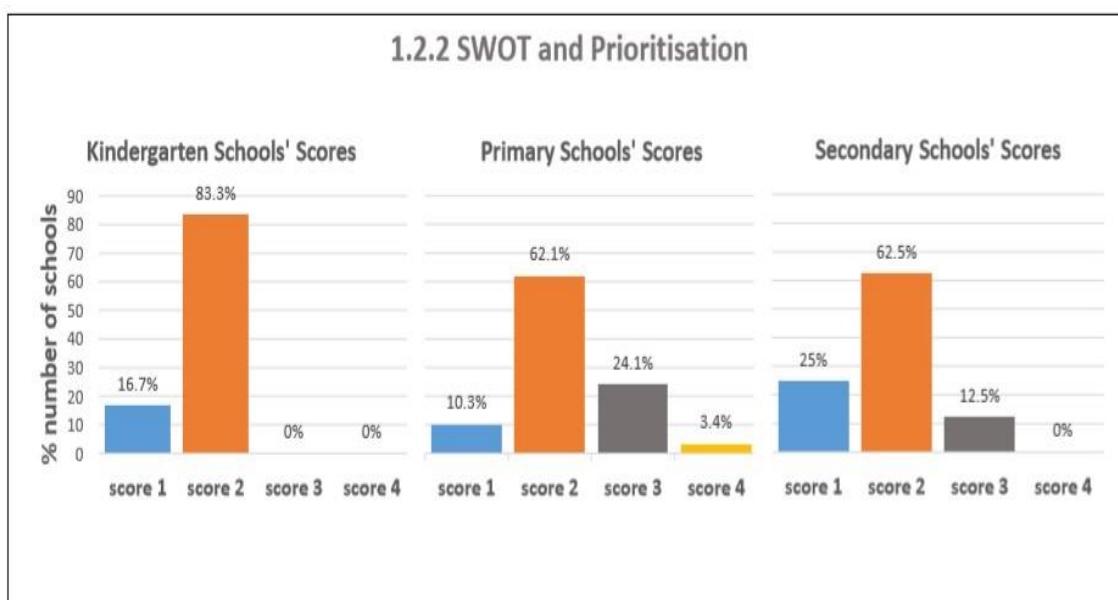


Figure 6: SWOT and Prioritisation

The 'SWOT and Prioritisation' process helps schools gather feedback about their areas of strength and development and subsequently select the specific priorities they want to focus on. In this criterion the Primary schools reviewed obtained the highest average in level 3 and 4 followed by Secondary sector and the Kindergarten sector. This criterion is inherently linked to data gathering which determines the information which is included as part of the SWOT and as a consequence influences the prioritisation exercise. Most of the recommendations linked to this section focus on the quality of the 'link' between the SWOT and the priorities chosen. In a number of cases, even though the school gathered data, a SWOT analysis was not carried out and the priorities were still decided by the Head of School and/or the SMT irrelevant of the data gathered and without any valid justification.

Another type of recommendation is tied to the difficulty encountered by schools to develop a SWOT analysis from the data gathered. Further to this, data gathered, such as outcomes from lesson observations, were rarely included as part of the SWOT analysis. Many recommendations also asked for

further attention to be given to the prioritisation exercise, that is, the selecting of priorities from the collated SWOT analysis. Recommendations also suggested that the schools would gather further insight if the outcomes of the assessment processes adopted were analysed and included as part of the SWOT analysis.

SMART ACTION PLANS:

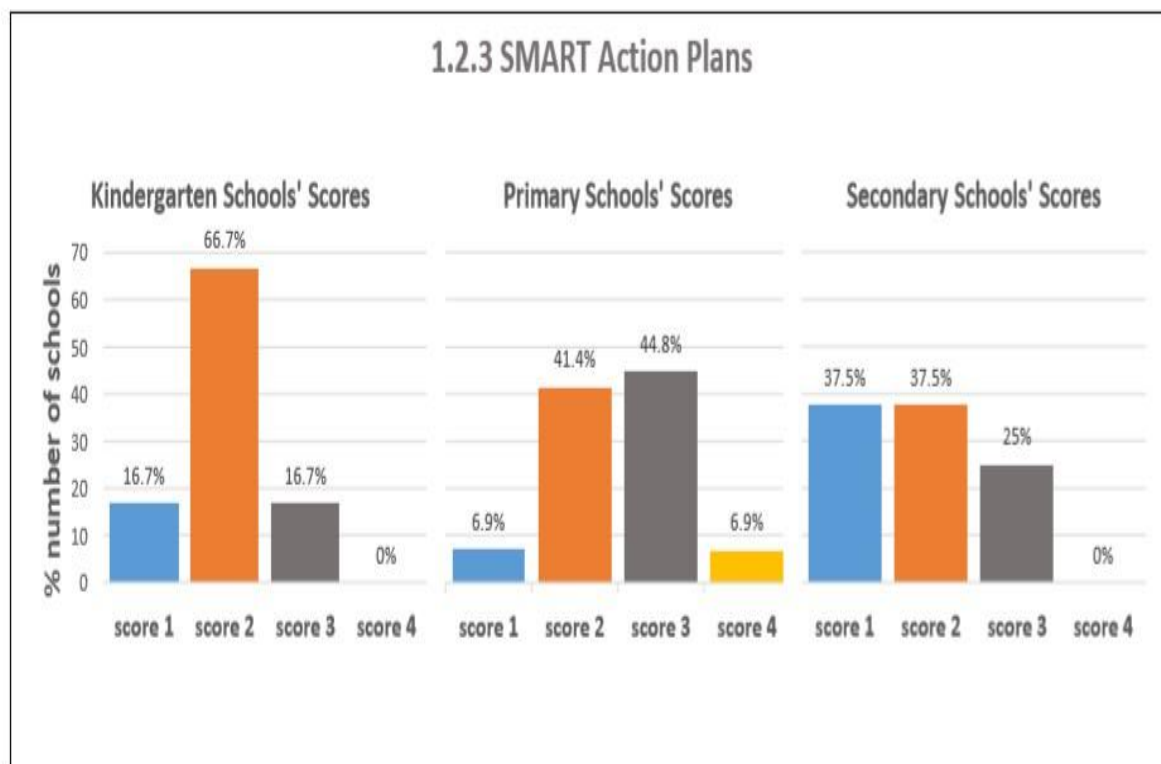


Figure 7: SMART Action Plans

Conversely, this criterion transpired as the strongest with the Primary level carrying the highest score in level 3 and 4 followed by Kindergarten and Secondary schools. The fact that Primary schools are giving more attention to the discussion of action plans during curriculum time sessions as well as SDP sessions is, as a consequence, influencing the SMARTness of action plans as there is more time to reflect, discuss and tweak for effectiveness. In many cases within the Primary sector it was observed that teachers worked on action plans by year group and this was beneficial to the school in terms of increased focus as well as a higher rate of implementation in the classroom. On the other hand, action plans at Secondary level were often found not be written by the subject teachers within the particular department. This resulted in actions which were usually less focused thus affecting the smartness of the action plan as it was not specific to the subject or the teacher/s who are ultimately going to implement them.

IMPLEMENTATION:

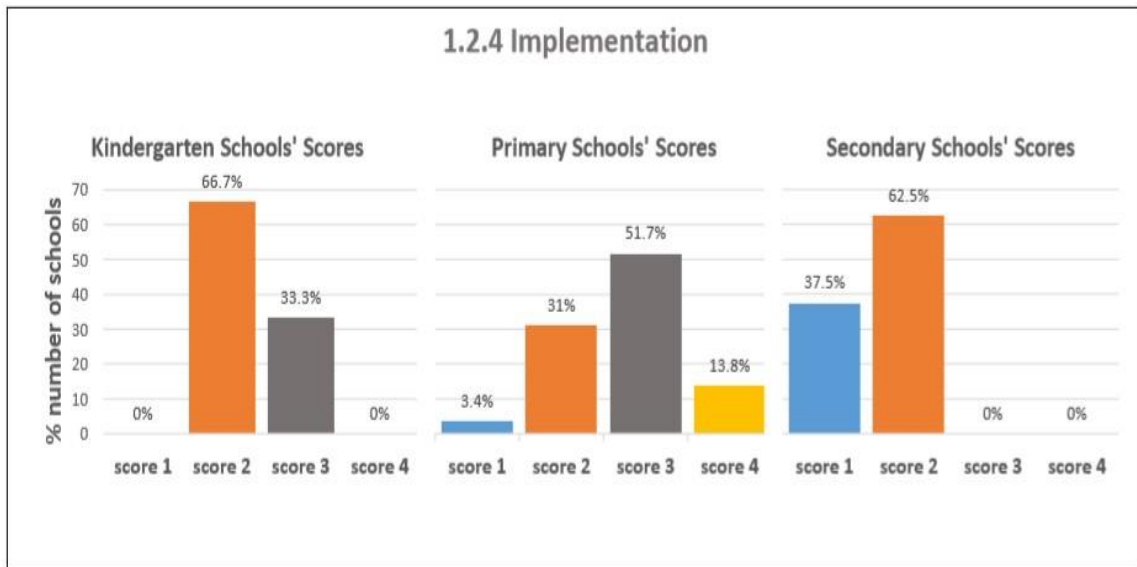


Figure 8: Implementation

Naturally, as a consequence of having SMART action plans, implementation is facilitated. In this particular criteria, Primary schools obtained the highest average for level 3 and 4 followed by Kindergarten and Secondary schools. In most cases if an action plan is SMART, its implementation is easier to manage. In this case Secondary schools scored the lowest, and analysis of the Record of Outcomes strongly corroborates this finding as it often transpired that if action plans are not SMART enough, they are difficult to follow and consequently lose their effectiveness.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

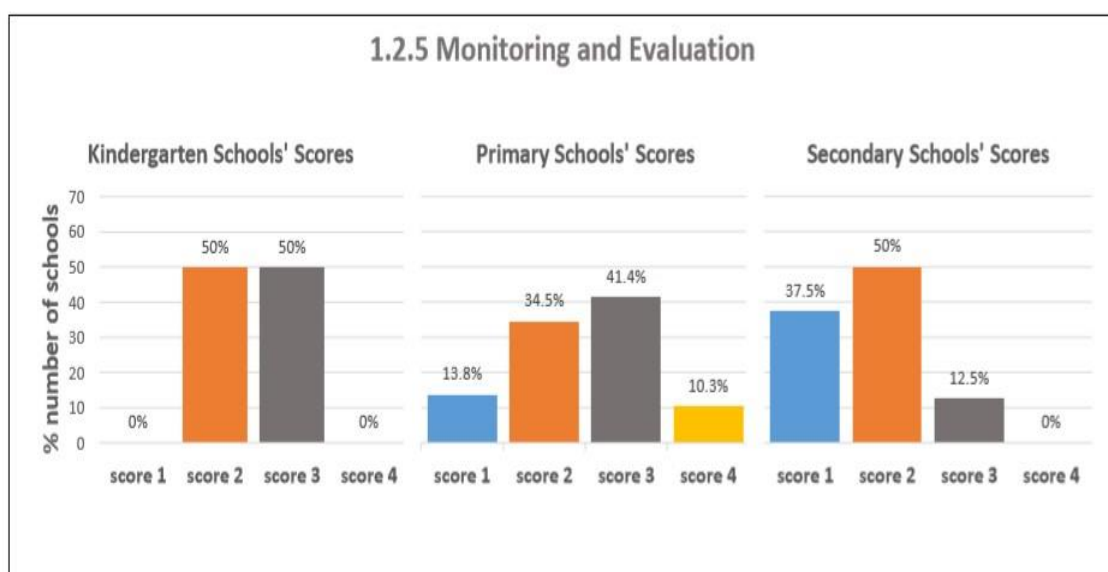


Figure 9: Monitoring and Evaluation

This criterion sees standalone Kindergartens leading, closely followed by the Primary sector and the Secondary sector. Most recommendations included in the Record of Outcomes in this regard focus on the need for more meaningful monitoring by the SMT of the implementation of action plans within the classroom as well as the need to evaluate these actions further during the year. In the case of Kindergarten this is possibly more feasible due to the much smaller settings offered where monitoring can be focused on small groups and easier to manage. In larger schools' members of the SMT often give the size of the school as one of the reasons why they cannot keep up with their monitoring roles especially in relation to SDP targets.

2.3 Strengths and Areas for Development

STRENGTHS:

- Most schools are gathering information from the different stakeholders.
- There was a marked improvement in the writing of SMART action plans especially at Primary level.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- There needs to be a more varied use of research tools during the gathering of information phase of the internal review process. This can include outcomes from lesson observations as well as analysis of results and assessment.
- Schools need to ensure that there is a clear link between the SWOT analysis and the choice of priorities.
- Better planning of the monitoring of the implementation of action plans with the specific intention to provide guidance and drive instructional leadership and guidance.





SECTION 3: LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 General Overview:

During one day reviews, the bulk of the evidence obtained is linked to the lesson observations held in class with a stratified selection of teachers. This stratification is mainly based on reaching a range of year groups and subjects within Primary and Secondary schools respectively. The criteria included in the lesson observation for the one day visits focus on the outcomes of the lesson and how the teacher approaches the delivery of the lesson through strategies used to engage all learners in class.

3.2 Analysis of Criteria:

RELATIONSHIPS CONDUCIVE TO LEARNING:

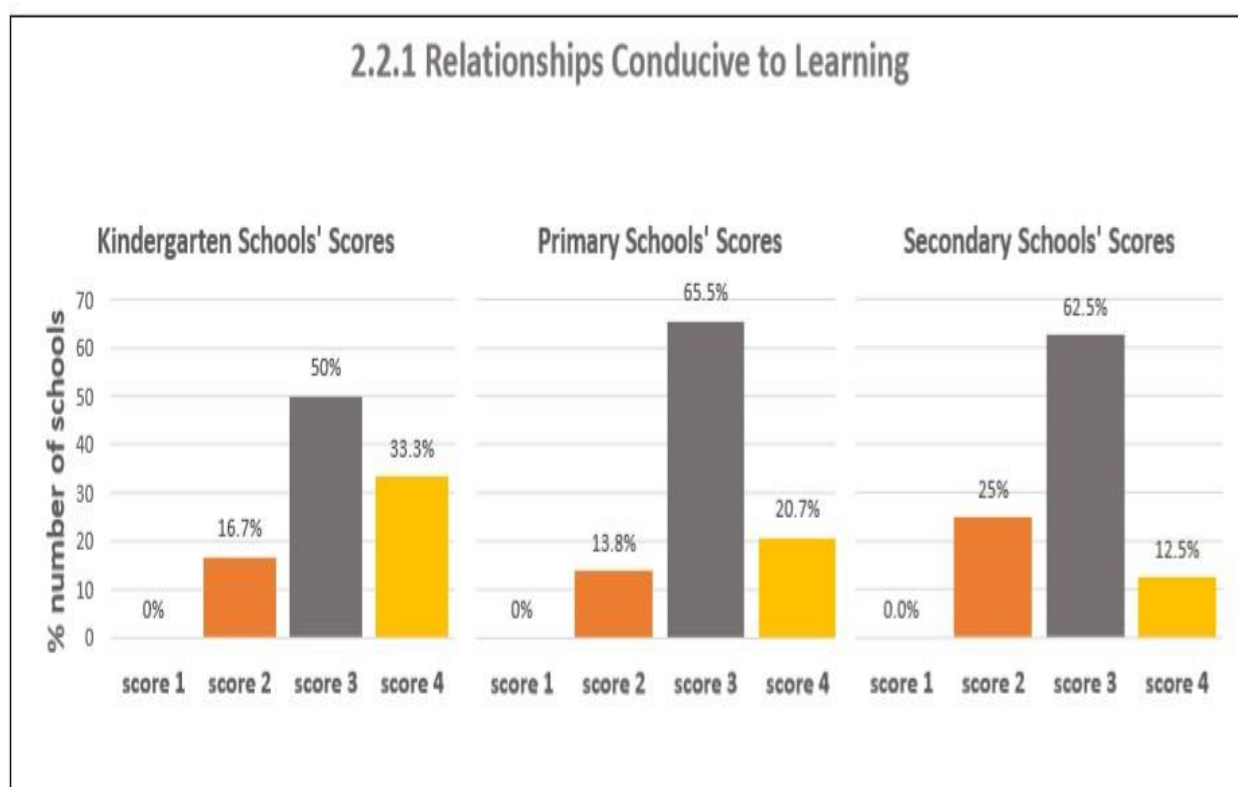


Figure 10: Relationships conducive to learning

As seen from the data, this is the strongest criterion with the highest percentages in level 3 and 4. It is led by the Kindergarten settings followed by the Primary schools and the Secondary sector. In most Record of Outcomes, the relationship between the teacher and the learners was praised and was often considered as an important component of the learning environment. Many teachers used this to their advantage when delivering the lesson. However, analysis of the record of outcomes shows that in some cases this

positive relationship can be used better by teachers during lessons especially in liaison with formative assessment strategies used to reach all learners in class.

SESSION DEVELOPMENT:

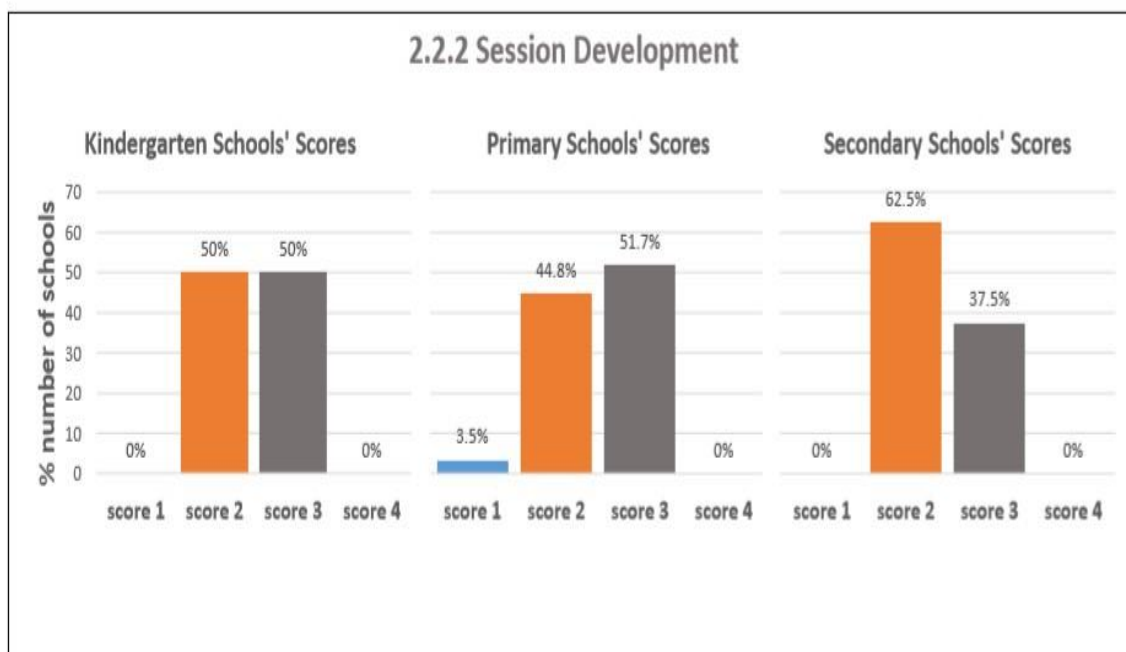


Figure 11: Session Development

When it comes to the criterion for Session Development, statistics show that Primary schools achieved the highest average, followed closely by Kindergarten and Secondary schools. The Record of Outcomes for a number of schools praise the development of activities for the early years' sector within Kindergarten and Primary settings especially in view of the introduction of planning that revolves around learners' interest or the emergent curriculum. In the case of many of the Secondary school settings reviewed as well as some Primary schools, recommendations put forward addressed the need for educators to reflect further on the development of lessons especially in relation to assessment strategies used and activities planned.



ADDRESSING LEARNER VARIABILITY:

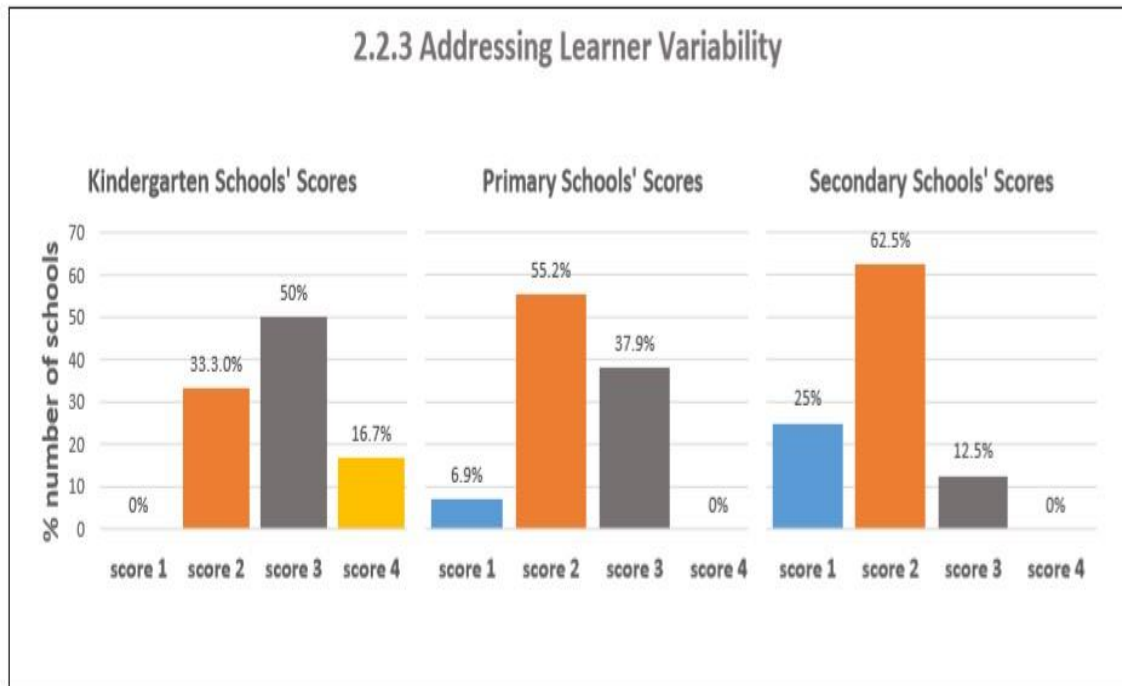


Figure 12: Addressing Learner variability

Data from one day reviews shows that learner variability is best addressed at Kindergarten level with the highest average for level 3 and 4. At a relevant distance are the Primary and the Secondary level. This is also a section which needs greater focus on improvement especially at Secondary level. The discrepancy between the different sectors can be possibly attributed to the recent introduction of an approach focusing on learners' interests introduced at Kinder level through the emergent curriculum approach. Feedback from the Record of Outcomes often praises Kindergarten and Primary schools for practicing such pedagogies which focus on learners' interests and therefore automatically leading towards an approach which would be more relevant to the learner. On the other hand, recommendations for this criterion, particularly in the Secondary, were linked to the lack of use of diverse strategies to be able to reach different learners during sessions.



LEARNER ENGAGEMENT:

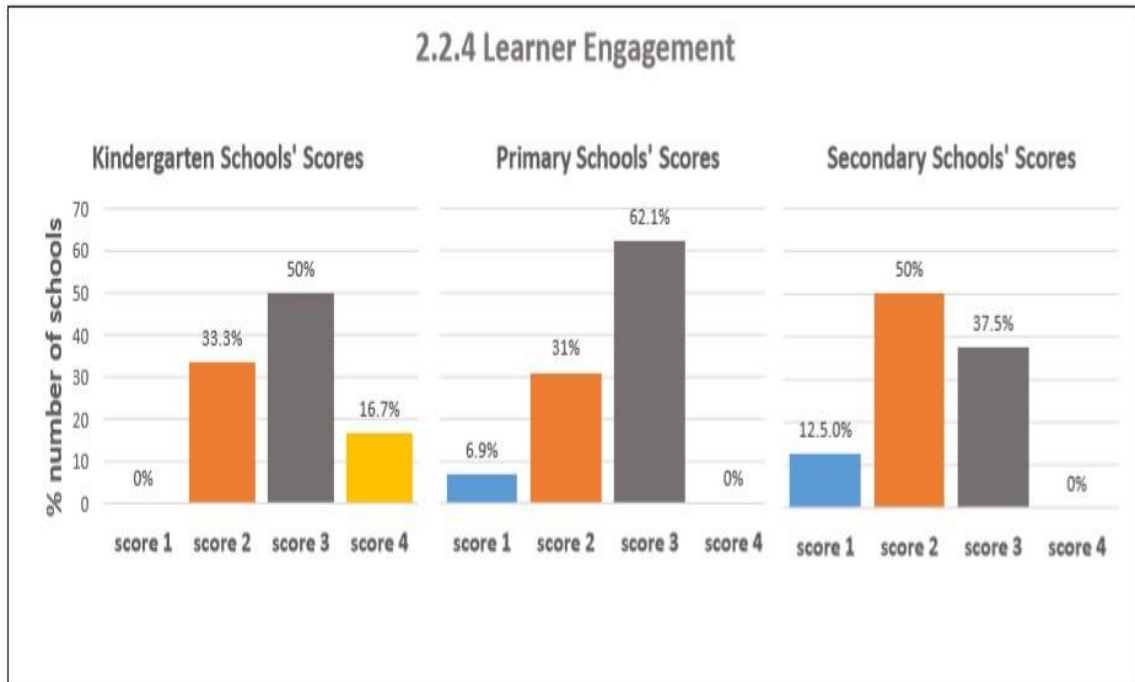


Figure 13: Learner Engagement

When considering learner engagement, statistics show that Kindergarten settings average the highest at level 3 and 4 followed closely by the Primary sector and the Secondary sector respectively. This section is strongly linked to the previous criterion especially in the light that if learners feel that the lesson is not engaging⁴ enough then it also means that their particular needs or preferences are not being met. Reviewers also frequently commented that during observations lessons were teacher-centered where learners were only involved sporadically through direct questioning rather than included as part of the learning experience. In fact, recommendations often focused on the need to increase learner engagement through the adoption of different strategies which would help reach all learners in class. In some cases, mainly at Secondary level, engagement in the classroom was also linked to learner behaviour.

⁴ Criteria defining an engaging lesson can be obtained from the lesson observation sheet for one day reviews.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY:

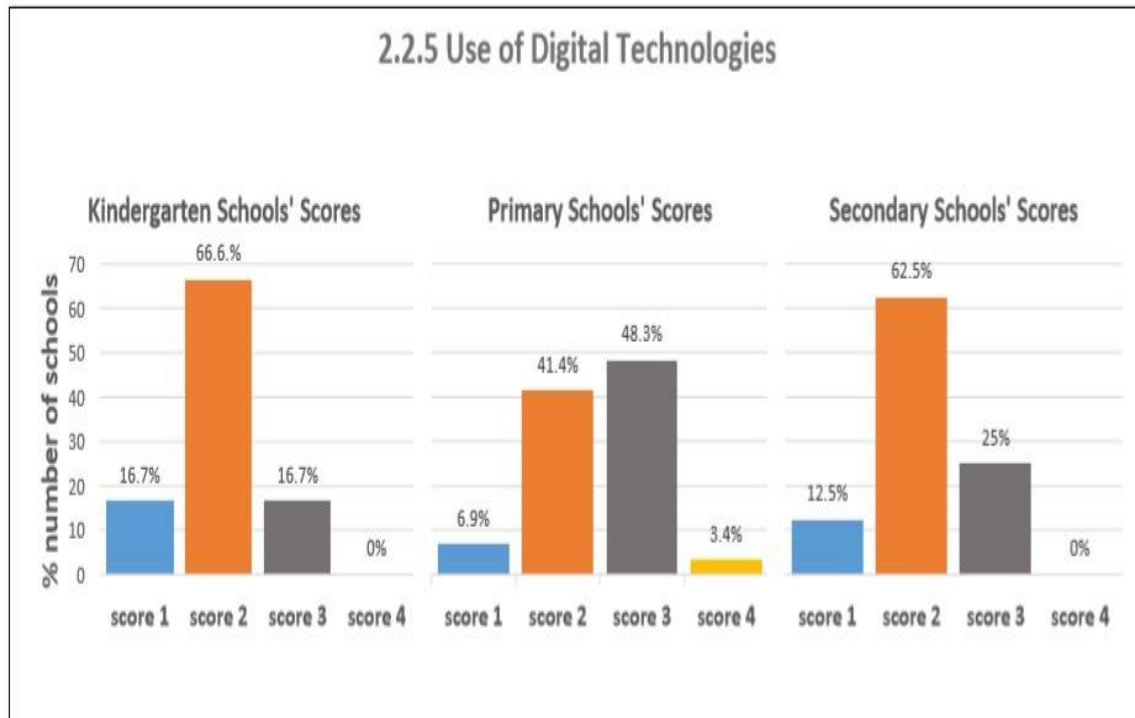


Figure 14: Use of Digital Technology

The use of digital technology in the case of one day external reviews focuses mainly on the observed use of the interactive whiteboard and tablets especially in the case of primary settings. In this criterion, Primary schools reviewed obtained the highest average percentage for levels 3 and 4 followed by the Secondary sector and the Kinder sector. Data obtained from the record of outcomes shows that the majority of positive comments, including the interactive use of digital technology, are linked to the Primary, where in several instances, teachers include learners in activities using the interactive whiteboard and tablets as part of the session. On the other hand, many of the recommendations for the need for better use of technology are linked to the Secondary sector where most teachers observed during the one-day visits used digital technology such as the interactive whiteboard or the all in one screen mainly to display presentations or show videos. In this case, an increased level of reflection on how technology can be used interactively and involve learners more was recommended. As regards the standalone Kindergartens, the low average percentage for levels 3 and 4 can be possibly attributed to recent developments in the early years' pedagogy that advocates a 'Learning through Play' approach where learning can be addressed in a variety of ways. One of these approaches can be carried out through digital technology which can be definitely used in a more productive way to engage learners.

REFLECTION UPON LEARNING:

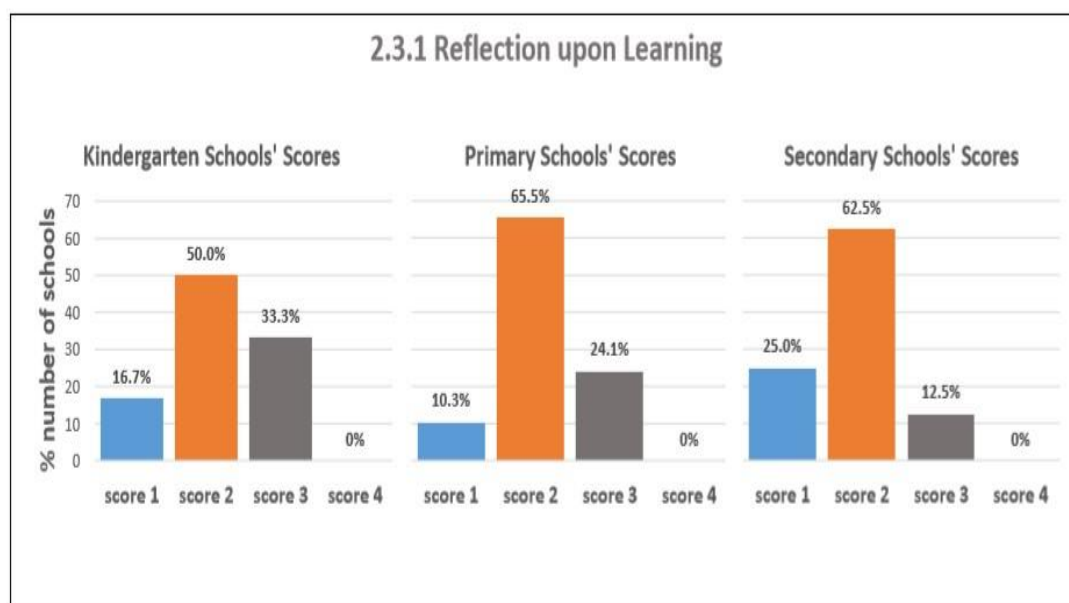


Figure 15: Reflection upon Learning

This criterion sees again the Kindergarten displaying the highest average for level 3 and 4 followed by the Primary sector and the Secondary sector respectively. As can be seen from the table above, percentages in this section range higher in level 1 and 2. This is in fact reflected in the feedback as most recommendations linked to learning and teaching emphasise the need for more learner reflection on the learning which goes on in the classroom. In this regard, a number of recommendations also focus on the need to give learners the opportunity to express themselves and communicate what they have learnt in different ways during the session. Interestingly, a number of recommendations are linked to the need to improve the questioning techniques used during sessions. Most call upon the teacher to reflect more on the types of questions asked and how these can be of a higher order thus allowing learners to reflect further upon their learning to be able to answer them. Well thought out questioning techniques can also serve as an assessment tool for the teachers to see if the outcomes of the session are being reached, if there needs to be a re-assessment while planning and if learners can be pushed further. The general considerations in this section lead to the need for learners to be given a more significant role during lessons. Strategies adopted should engage learners in a way which helps them learn about the process they are going through during the lesson. This will definitely render the learning experience more meaningful and relevant.

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT PRACTICES:

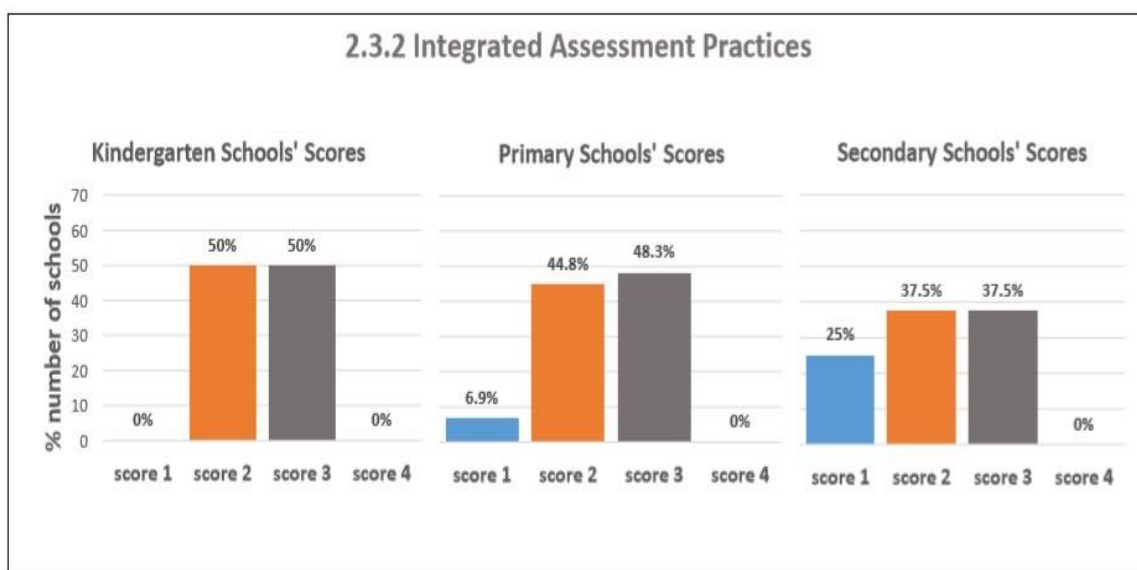


Figure 16: Integrated Assessment Practices

In this section standalone Kindergartens obtained the highest average in level 3 and 4 followed by Primary schools and Secondary schools. This section focuses on the integration of formative/authentic assessment and feedback into the learning process. The reason Kindergartens are integrating more successfully assessment practices may be linked to the emergent curriculum reform which promotes an authentic assessment approach.

Most recommendations in this area focus on the need to use collaborative learning where learners are given the opportunity to work together and share their ideas. Recommendations also focus on the need to reflect on how assessment practices can be more varied and how they can become integrated in the planned session as part of the learning and teaching process. A push towards an ongoing assessment approach, which includes different modes of assessment throughout the year, was also frequently mentioned. On the other hand, the verbal and formative feedback given by teachers during the lesson was often praised and considered a strength. Notwithstanding that in certain cases we have observed pockets of formative assessment being used for learning, the shift to formative assessment is not yet yielding the expected original outcome.

3.3 Strengths and Areas for Development.

STRENGTHS:

- Teachers' positive relationship with learners is leading to an environment conducive to learning.
- Most teachers are giving formative verbal feedback to learners.
- The emergent curriculum being introduced at Kindergarten level is being taken on board by educators and schools.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- It is imperative for teachers to have a clearer understanding of the objectives of formative assessment and how this can be used effectively within the classroom.
- There is the need to further address learner variability in the classroom so as to increase learner engagement.
- There should be more focus on creating opportunities within the classroom where learners can reflect upon their learning.
- There needs to be more purposeful and interactive use of digital technology especially at Secondary level.





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SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

4.1 Internal Review and School Development Planning

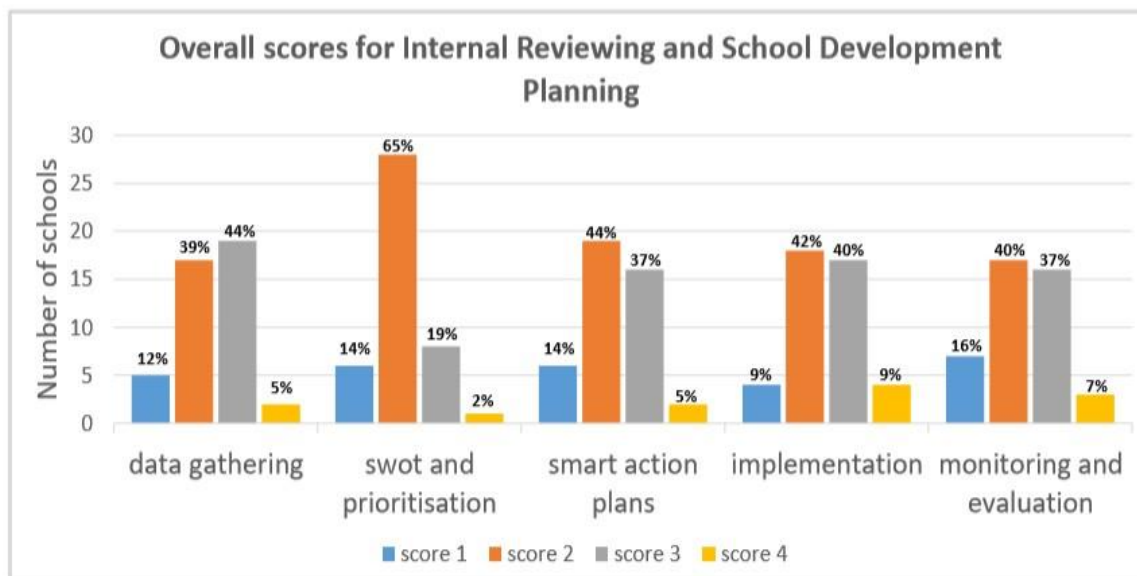


Figure 17: Overall Scores for Internal Review and School Development Planning

When it comes to the internal review process that leads to the SDP, the analysis shows that a marked improvement was observed in the **writing of SMART action plans** followed by the **gathering of data**. The general feeling from the different record of outcomes is that the SMARTer the action plans are, the more effective and organised the Monitoring and Evaluation is. Analysis of the Record of Outcomes also shows that some work needs to be done in the **SWOT analysis and the choice of priorities that schools should focus on**. The Primary level is working relatively well in most of the criteria and in general schools seem to have started working towards the consistent development of more effective school development plans. Kindergarten settings are also working on the development of the internal review and the writing of action plans but many were found to be in need of further guidance on how to adapt the internal review process to a smaller setting. Secondary schools need to focus more on the identification of priorities, the writing of SMART action plans especially on learning and teaching, as well as effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

4.2 Learning and Teaching and Assessment

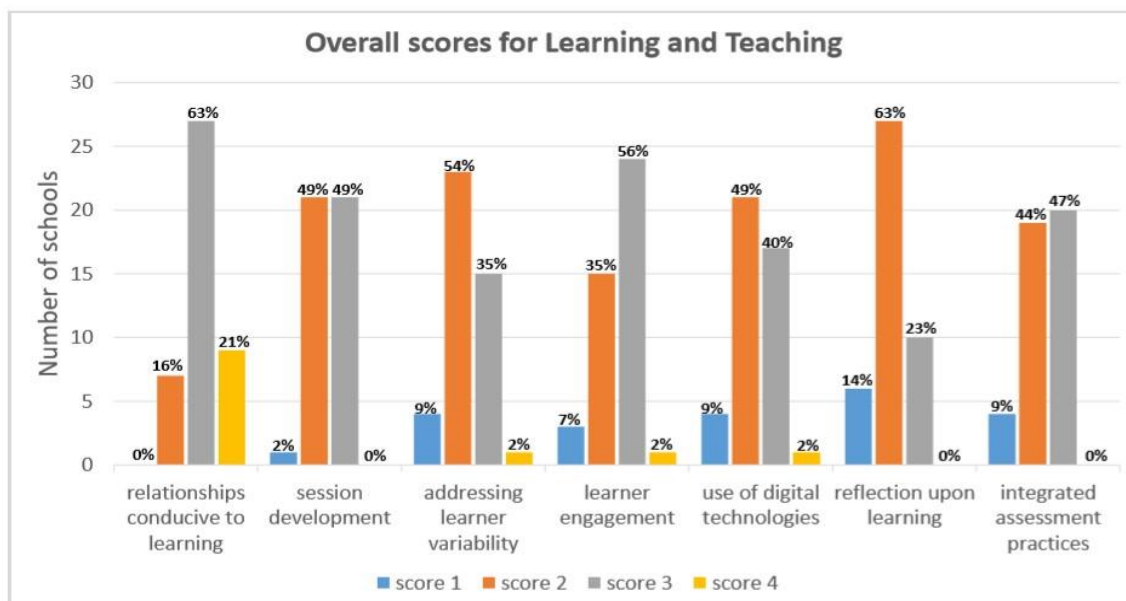


Figure 18: Overall scores for Learning and Teaching

In the area of Learning and Teaching and Assessment, the highest average was linked to the **relationships developed between teachers and learners** which were observed to be, in most of the sessions, conducive to learning. Positive relationships naturally influence **learner engagement** which is the second highest average score. However, several recommendations also focused on the importance of increasing learner engagement through the development of more opportunities for collaboration. It was clear, through the recommendations made by the reviewers, that learners' metacognitive skills and executive functioning are not being tapped in appropriately. Furthermore, they are not being provided with enough opportunities to develop their learning to learn competencies. **Session development, learner variability and integrated assessment practices** can all be linked to a common recommendation which emanates from the one day reviews carried out, that is, the need for more reflection when planning sessions especially considering the variability of learners which are present in the classroom. Including relevant and valid assessment strategies within the structure of the sessions will also help address learner variability. The last two ranking criteria are **the use of digital technology** where recommendations called for its more interactive use, especially at Secondary level and **reflection upon learning**. The latter is especially worrying as this was a consistent recommendation in most Record of Outcomes. Learners need to be further guided on how they can reflect upon learning and this is the pivotal role of the educator in the classroom. If learners are not led to reflect on what they are learning, then the validity, retention and application of that learning can be compromised.