



The NSC Tourism Practical Assessment Task (PAT) investigation

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The place of the PAT in Tourism

The PAT is intended to :

- **showcase** the learner's **understanding** of the tourism industry as a dynamic economic sector;
- **enhance** the **knowledge, skills** and **values** learners acquired in the different grades;
- provide the **opportunity** for learners to engage in their **own learning** by establishing **connections to life outside** the classroom, **addressing real world challenges**, and **developing life skills**;

The place of the PAT in Tourism

The PAT is intended to :

- cover **parts** of the curriculum that are **difficult** to **assess** in the theoretical examination;
- **demonstrate** applied **competence** through open-ended questions on different cognitive levels.
- The PAT contributes 25 % (100 marks) to the final exit level Grade 12 examination

The evaluation of the Practical Assessment Task

The PAT investigation had the intent to:

- continue monitoring the standards and appropriateness of assessment practices in the NSC,
- analyse the practical assessment tasks and determine the level of question difficulty of the items analysed.
- This second intent was to determine whether the task question is difficult (or easy) due to its content, the nature of the stimulus, the process required by the task or the complexity of the expected response.

The evaluation of the Practical Assessment Task

- The instrument used in the analysis draws conceptually on frameworks dealing with reproductive and productive thinking.
- The instrument intended to measure the level of reproductive and productive skills not only in terms of the cognitive domain, but also the psychomotor and affective domains which include reactive and interactive categories required to be displayed in the tasks.

How the evaluation took place

- Team members were introduced to and orientated in the PAT. Members from industry were provided with a brief overview of the purpose, the place, structure and the assessment of the PAT as part of the NCS.
- Using the evaluation tool, specific duties were allocated to individual team members for investigation and report back.
- Discussions were held to reach consensus on each item analysed before an input was made on the analysis instrument.

The skills categories

- For the purpose of this analysis, the team used Romiszowski (1981) definitions of skill categories:
- **Reproductive skills** refer to the reproduction of known content, concepts, and application in familiar contexts;
- **Productive skills** refer to application in novel contexts related to critical and creative thinking, which are thinking skills that assist in the productive thinking process;
- **Reactive skills** refer to the reaction and response to a stimulus such as reading material, case studies and scenarios;
- **Interactive skills** relate to continuous two-way transfer of information between a user and the central point of a communication system, or where two or more persons, forces, etc. acting upon or in close relation with each other.

Indicators of difficulty

- The four-category conceptual framework for thinking about question difficulty according to Leong (2006) was used for this investigation:
 - **Content** (subject/concept) difficulty;
 - **Stimulus** (question) difficulty;
 - **Task** (process) difficulty;
 - **Expected response** difficulty

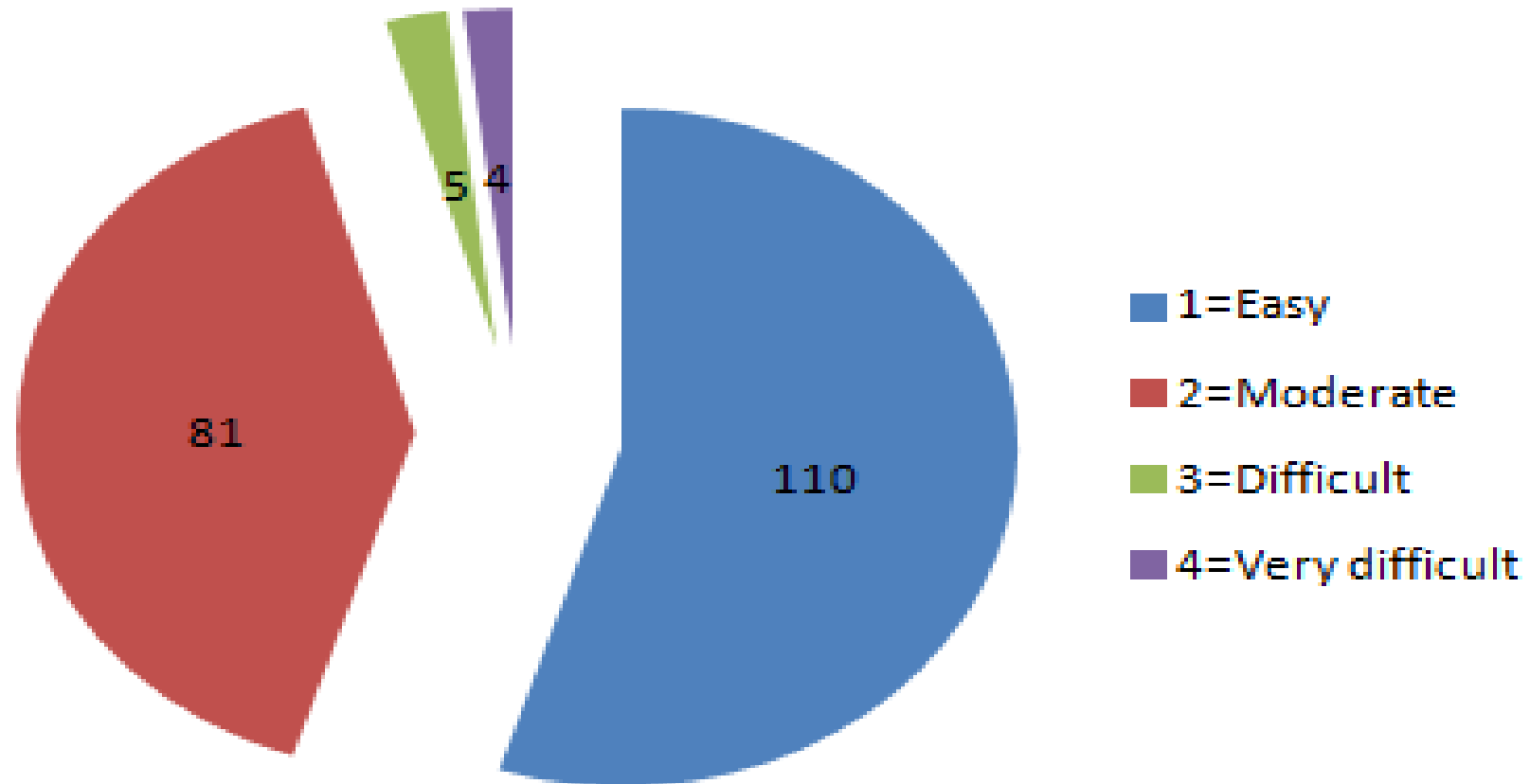
Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

A summary of the skill categories of the 2013 PAT

Skill category	Marks	Total marks	% of total
CR= Cognitive reproductive skill	96		48%
CP= Cognitive productive skill	66		33%
PR= Psychomotor reproductive skill	2		1%
PP= Psychomotor productive skill	11		6%
RR= Reactive reproductive skill	0		0%
RP= Reactive productive skill	3		2%
IR= Interactive reproductive skill	0		0%
IP= Interactive productive skill	22	200	11%

Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

Level of difficulty of all items in the 2013 PAT



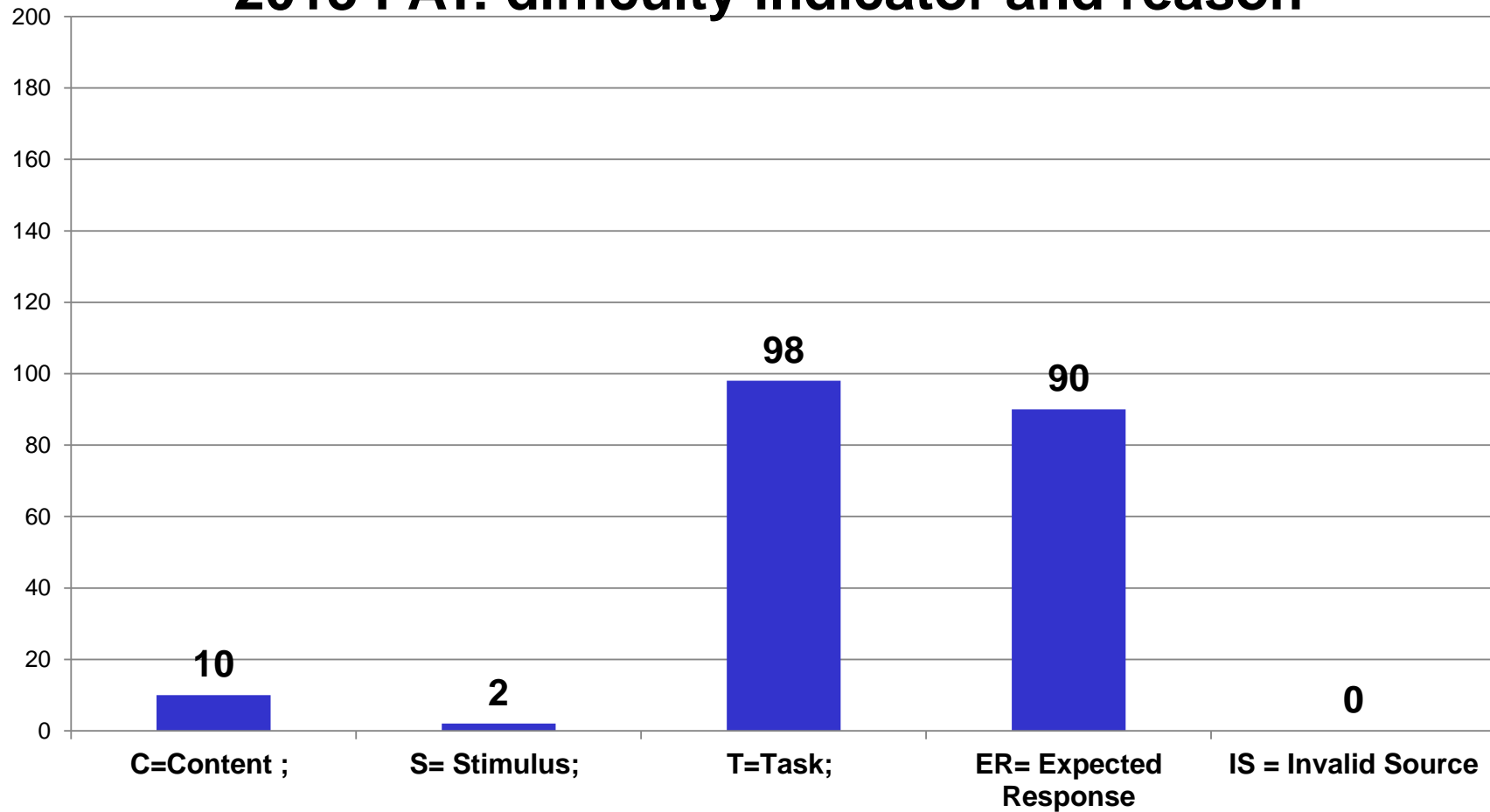
Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

Cognitive levels of the PAT

Levels	Ideal Percentage (%)	Actual percentage (%)
Remembering	30	55
Understanding	20	41
Applying	30	3
Analysis		
Synthesis	20	2
Evaluation		

Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

2013 PAT: difficulty indicator and reason



Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

Based on the above, the team concluded that:

- The **PAT is far too theoretical** and does not give learners sufficient opportunities to demonstrate practical abilities.
- The **level of complexity of the PAT is not appropriate for Grade 12.**
- The **PAT is biased towards lesser challenging cognitive demand questions**, 96% of the questions require remembering of knowledge and understanding.

Findings: The skills categories and indicators of difficulty

Based on the above, the team concluded that:

- the main contributors to the low difficulty level of the PAT are the standard of task coupled with the low level of expected responses.
- this **PAT cannot be considered a fair assessment** as it advantages well-resourced schools and economically-privileged learners with access to research material: more than 80% of the task requires learners merely to copy directly from sources.

Indication of progression

- The evaluation team could not find clear guidance in the NCS in terms of the nature of the PAT, the content and skills to be assessed, the progression across the grades in terms of content and skills.
- The analysis was done on the Grade 12 PAT only, therefore the team was unable to determine progression across grades

Assessment guidance

The team found that the PAT gives adequate detailed, specific, clear and comprehensive guidance to learners.

However, the **assessment guidance for teachers lacks clarity and allow for multiple interpretations** which might result in different assessors reaching different conclusions.

The majority of questions can only be accurately assessed by using a memorandum which is in direct contradiction to the open-ended requirement stated in the SAG.

How the quality and usefulness of the practical assessment can be strengthened

- The evaluation team is of the opinion that the PAT is not in its essence a task that succeeds in assessing practical abilities. The PAT in its current format is a mere low level desktop research task disguised as a practical assessment task.
- To strengthen the quality and usefulness of the PAT, the DBE has to review the structure, the design features and the requirements of the PAT

How the quality and usefulness of the practical assessment can be strengthened

The following would need attention:

- The content and nature of the subject,
- The overall administration of the PAT,
- the inequalities in availability and quality of resources needed to complete the PAT,
- the content knowledge of teachers and their ability to assess accurately and fairly
- The evaluation team found that the Practical Assessment Task is **not** a good example for future use and should be critically re-examined immediately.

Recommendations

The team recommends that:

- the practical component of the subject, in its current format, be re-evaluated.
- the PAT should be reviewed in its entirety considering the nature and structure of the subject to ensure a fair, valid and authentic assessment.
- DBE reviews the current structure and design features of the PAT and investigates alternative assessment models to ensure the task meets the expected standard required from Grade 12 learners.

Concluding remarks

- A good practical assessment task should be **well-balanced** in terms of opportunities for **more psychomotor productive skills** to demonstrate practical abilities. It should also comply with the requirements of **enhancing a learner's understanding of the tourism industry**, establishing **connections to life outside the classroom**, addressing **real world challenges**, **develop life skills** and provided **opportunities** for learners to engage in their **own learning as self-reflection**.