



The Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa  
13th Annual National Congress  
2 - 6 July 2007  
Mpumalanga  
Uplands College  
White River near Nelspruit

## Let's register early! Or else ...

*Alwyn Olivier, Council Congress Liaison*

Here is a real-life problem for you:

Imagine that you are the organiser of AMESA's Annual Congress. Your task includes arranging the printing of the congress papers in a Proceedings booklet, ordering a congress bag for each participant, arranging accommodation for participants in the school hostel, arranging catering for participants, and arranging transport to and from the airport as participants arrive.

What is the problem? You need the information of how many of each to order, and you need to know well ahead of the congress, e.g. the Proceedings need to go to the printer a month before the start of congress, the caterer wants the numbers two weeks ahead of time, etc.

In theory this is no problem: people register for the congress, you build a database, so you know exactly how many participants there will be, you estimate that there may be, say 50 late registrations, so you simply pass on these numbers to the service providers. However, in practise it is far from simple and estimating the number of participants has become a lottery! The reason is that too many people do not register beforehand, but simply arrive at the congress ...

Kwena Masha, the real organiser of the real AMESA 2006 Congress writes in his report:

By the end of May 2006 (a month before congress) - we only had 57 fully registered delegates on our database. On the eve of the Congress the number had risen to 159. By Wednesday 5 July we had 354 fully registered delegates, which means that 195 delegates arrived unannounced at the Congress.

Getting the numbers wrong seriously affects the quality of every aspect of the congress for everybody. Kwena again:

... almost 200 delegates arrived at the congress unannounced. Whilst the LOC (Local Organising Committee) went out of its way to process these delegates as fast as possible, we were simply overwhelmed. To worsen the situation, the Congress bags were also insufficient, as we could not order more not knowing how the situation was going to unfold.

Catering arrangements proved to be a daunting task, as up to the Sunday evening no one had an idea as to how many delegates would attend the congress. So the first day meant praying hard for delegates not to exceed 400 and not to be less than 300.

Getting the numbers wrong has serious financial implications. If you over-estimate you may make a financial loss. If you under-estimate you may also make a financial loss, because to cater for such a number of unannounced guests brings additional costs, e.g. if you have to order 100 extra bags at short notice, the unit cost per bag is much higher than for the original assignment. In 2006 the LOC had to arrange additional accommodation and additional transport to handle the unexpected people, etc.

As an incentive to register in time, and preferably to register early, the LOC for Congress 2007 is introducing a category of late registration, which we will implement rigorously:

Early registration:	R550 (by 15 May)
Normal registration:	R600 (16 May to 15 June)
Late registration:	R750 (after 15 June)

In addition, the LOC cannot guarantee that hostel accommodation will be available for people registering after 15 June.

I trust that everyone can identify with the anguish in Kwena's descriptions above, and that everyone can understand the impact of late registration on the quality of congress services.

We call on all concerned to help to establish a culture of registering for meetings timeously to help ensure professional quality meetings to the benefit of all. And it will also save you money!

