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Evaluation of the 2021 AMESA National Virtual Congress, 14 – 16 July 2021

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1. Contents

No	Heading	Page
1	<u>Contents</u>	2
2	<u>Introduction</u>	3
3	<u>Evaluation by phase</u>	3
4	<u>Regional representation in the evaluation</u>	4
5	<u>Receipt of the programme, links and other details</u>	4
6	<u>Comments about programme and links</u>	5
7	<u>Opening and closing ceremonies</u>	5
8	<u>Competitions; memory lane</u>	5
9	<u>Plenary addresses</u>	6
10	<u>Panel discussions</u>	6
11	<u>Phase committee meetings</u>	7
12	<u>Special interest groups</u>	7
13	<u>Parallel sessions</u>	9
14	<u>Annual general meeting</u>	10
15	<u>Future congresses</u>	10
16	<u>Other comments</u>	10
17	<u>Concluding remarks</u>	11

2. Introduction

Planning for the 2021 AMESA Congress started at the 2019 AMESA Congress at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban as it was envisaged that the Congress will take place in June/July 2020. At the beginning of February 2020, a meeting was held with the LOC in Pretoria, Gauteng to plot the way forward for AMESA Congress 2020. However, no one had realised at the time that South Africa and the world would become affected by a new world pandemic called COVID-19.

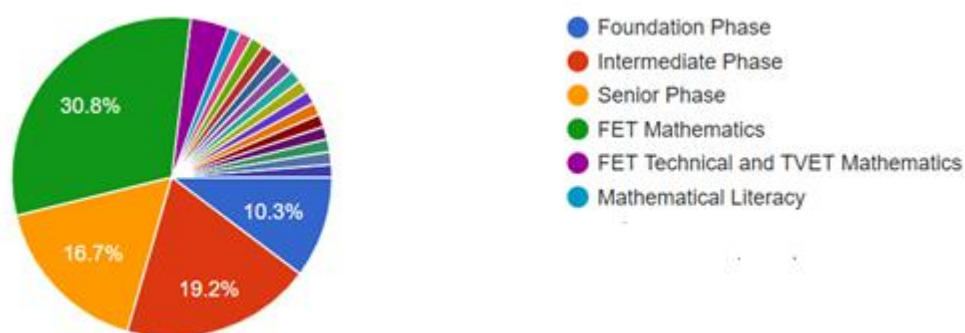
It is now history that President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster on 15 March 2020 and that schools and universities would be closed thereafter. It would have been impossible for the AMESA Congress to take place in 2020. The National Council of AMESA took a decision to formally postpone the Congress in July 2020 until further notice.

In January 2021, the National Council of AMESA took the decision to hold the AMESA Congress in July 2021, with the dates to be finalised once the amended school calendar was available. Thus, in February 2021, it was decided to hold the Congress virtually from 14 to 16 July 2021.

Registration for Congress 2021 was online and all sessions for Congress 2021 were held virtually. In all 301 delegates registered for Congress 2021 (264 registered online; 37 registered manually).

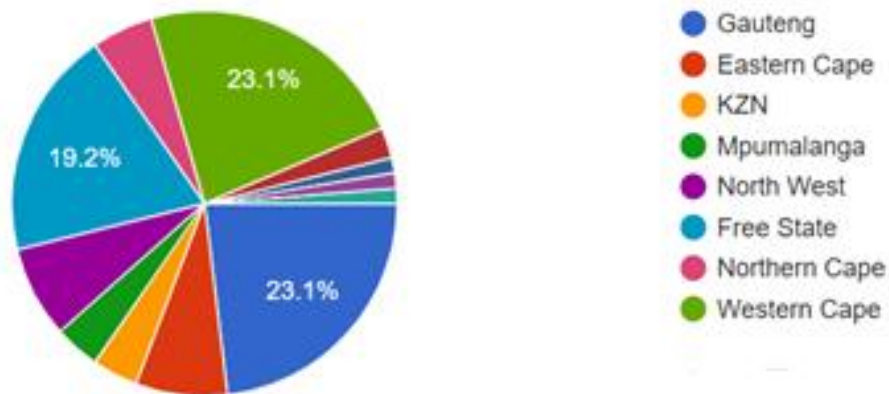
78 delegates participated in the evaluation of Congress 2021.

3. Evaluation by Phase



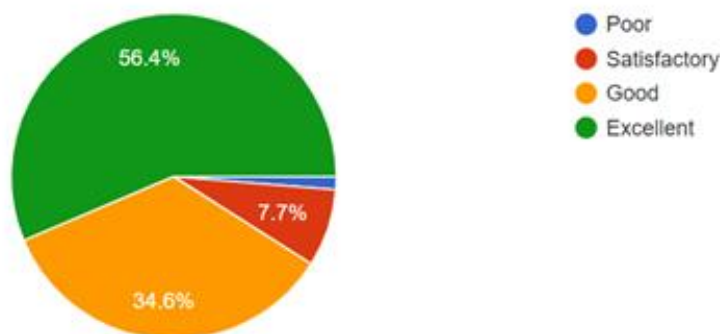
The pie-chart above shows the percentage of delegates (from the different phases) who participated in the evaluation of AMESA Congress 2021. Ironically approximately 70% of the delegates were senior phase teachers and upward. This is in sharp contrast to previous congresses where Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers formed the majority of delegates.

4. Regional representation in the evaluation



Although all regions of AMESA had delegates at Congress 2021, most of those who completed the evaluation of Congress 2021 came from 3 regions (provinces), Gauteng, Free State and Western Cape.

5. Receipt of the programme, links and other documents



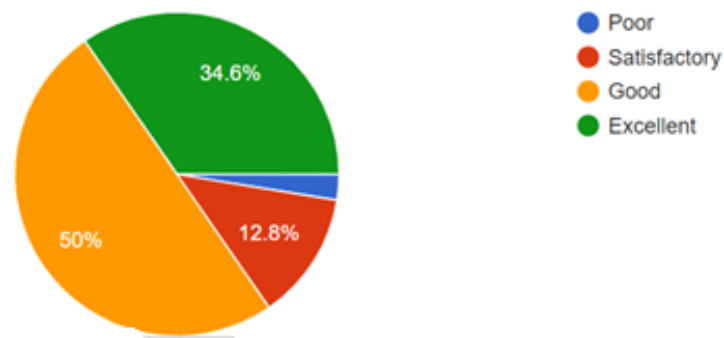
Congress 2021 heralded a new era for AMESA. It was the first time that the Congress was held virtually. The registration was online. It would appear that delegates were rather please with the arrangements with 91% indicated good or excellent in the receipt of the programme, conference links and other documents in preparation for Congress 2021.

6. Comments about programme and links

This was the first time in which the AMESA Congress was held virtually. The majority of the respondents indicated that the programme was “effective”; had clear and easily accessible links” and “was well thought out and easy to follow”

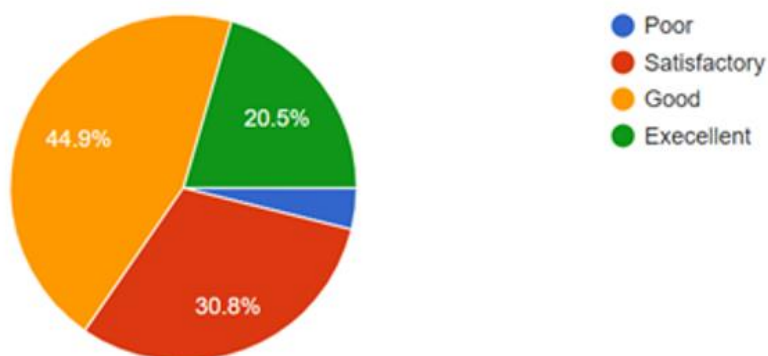
A small number of respondents had “challenges” which were usually linked to computer or connectivity issues.

7. Opening and closing ceremonies



Once again, there was overwhelming recognition of the efforts of the NOC and LOC with 84,6% stating that the opening and closing ceremonies were good to excellent.

8. Competitions, memory lane



The majority of delegates appeared to be pleased with the various competitions arranged by the Gauteng LOC and our sponsor

9. Plenary addresses

You can access the plenary papers [here](http://www.amesa.org.za/AMESA2021/Volume1.pdf) (<http://www.amesa.org.za/AMESA2021/Volume1.pdf>).

(1) Lindelani Mnguni

After the opening ceremony on 14 July 2021, Lindelani Mnguni delivered his plenary address which was based on the theme for Congress 2021. Respondents were unanimous in their recognition of the plenary address.

Some of the comments were:

“Excellent”; “thought-provoking”; “informative”; “very powerful and empowering”; “Informative and makes one really ponder on current teaching methodology and if its fit for the future”; “profound and insightful”; “How uplifting. I was energized by the presentation”.

(2) Satsope Maoto

This plenary was done on 15 July 2021. This plenary was also well received by delegates. Some of their comments were:

“Very informative and interesting for starting the day”; “interesting feedback on Primary Educator, High School Educator and Lecture that was quite informative showing the beauty of Mathematics”; “Very interesting presentation touched on many aspects of teaching and learning”; “Powerful rendition and enriching”; “The presenter was very excellent and was well informed of the subject matter”; “This was a helpful presentation as well. It taught a lot about the challenges we are facing when having to use ICT in schools”; “She shared that learners must have access to curricula, classroom practices as well as effective teachers”; “Clear and thought provoking”.

(3) Sophie Marques

Our third and final plenary took place early in the morning on Friday 16 July 2021. This plenary was conducted by Sophie Marques of University of Stellenbosch. This was also well received by delegates/ Some of their comments were:

“Linking Mathematics with the real life; “very informative and interesting as well”; “Powerful presentation highlighting challenges and how understanding and struggles impact teaching and learning”; “Truly inspirational! I love the idea that we should put the human back into the mathematician” Often learners are scared of the Maths teacher. It is vital that the maths teachers remembers (s)he is a TEACHER first.. that happens to love maths.

10. Panel Discussions

Panel Discussion 1: Chaired by Lindelani Mnguni

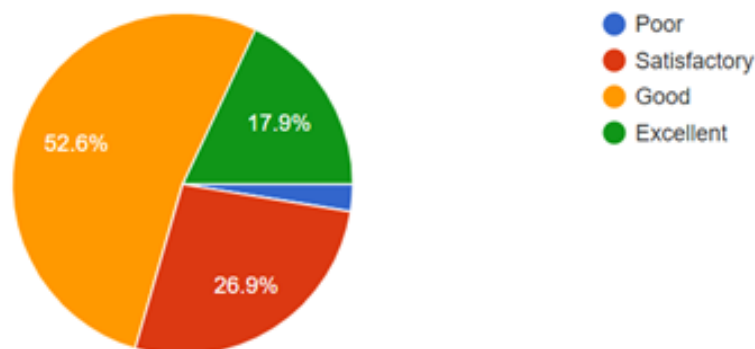
The overwhelming number of respondents commented favourably on panel discussion 1 which focussed on the theme of the Congress. However, there were some issues regarding the posing and answering of the questions posed during the question-time of the panel discussion.

Panel Discussion 2: Chaired by M Ndlovu

This panel discussion was also well received by most of the participants. Most stated that “the strategies of teaching mathematics across the phases were meaningful and insightful”. It highlighted the importance of mathematics from early years till learners are able to go to a TVET or higher education. Some agreed that that having TVET as a focus was very important as there appears to be some “issues” in this sector. Nonetheless, the importance of critical thinking and providing those opportunities for learners/students was covered in all panel presentations.

There were a few criticisms levelled against the panel about being too research focused rather than assisting the teachers with “classroom strategies”.

11. Phase committee meetings



Phase committee meetings form a compulsory part of the AMESA Congress and 2021 was no exception. Phase committee meetings took place on Wednesday 15 July 2021 from 15:00 to 16:00 and was classified as Parallel Session 3 in the programmes. During this slot meetings were held in the following:

Foundation Phase; Intermediate Phase; Senior Phase; FET Mathematics; Mathematical Literacy; Technical and TVET Mathematics; Teacher Education.

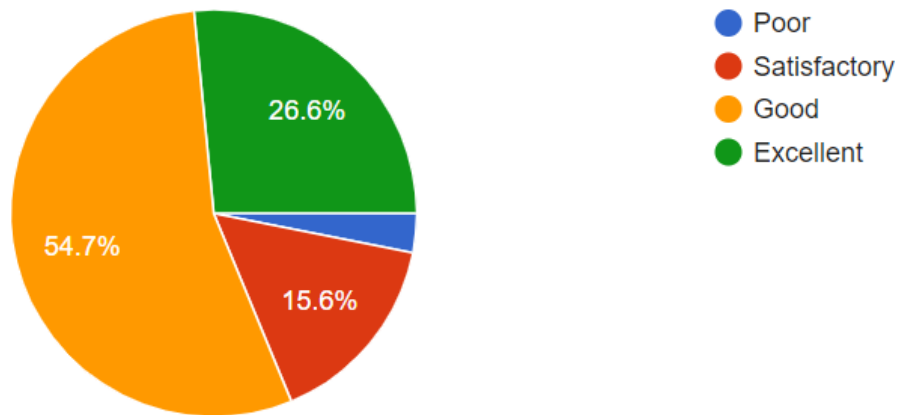
Minutes of the phase committees will appear in a separate document.

12. Special Interest Groups

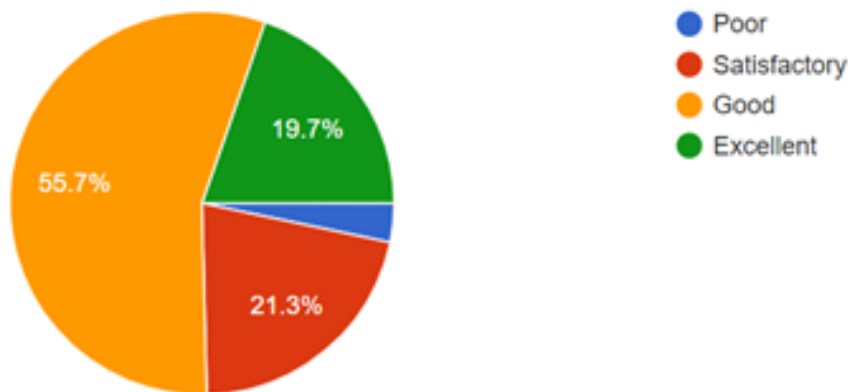
Another important part of AMESA Congresses is the meeting of the Special Interest Groups (SIG). This year there were 4 such Special Interest Groups. Problem Solving, Ethnomathematics (Including IKS); PrimTed (Geometry and Measurement); Academic Writing. The minutes of the discussions and resolutions of the various SIGs appear in a separate document.

The pie graphs are shown for each SIG.

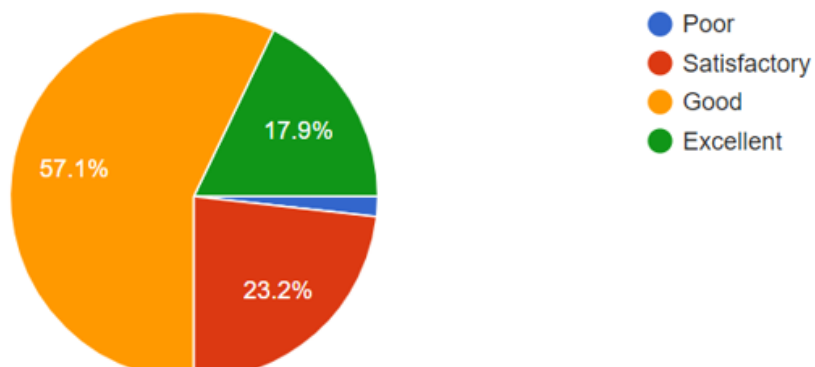
Problem Solving



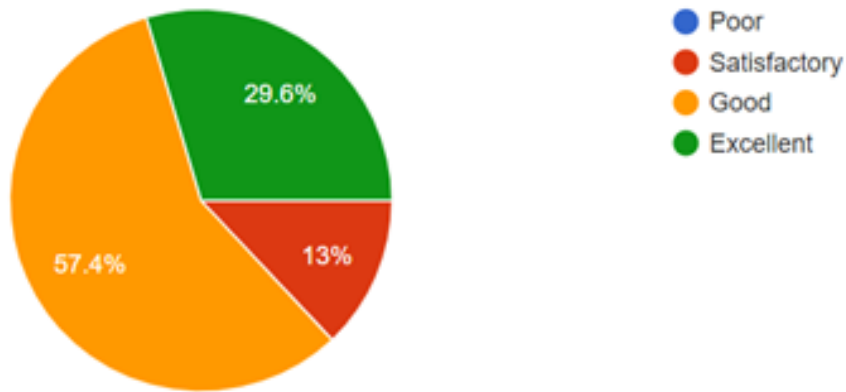
Ethnomathematics (and IKS)



PrimTED (Geometry & Measurement)



Academic Writing

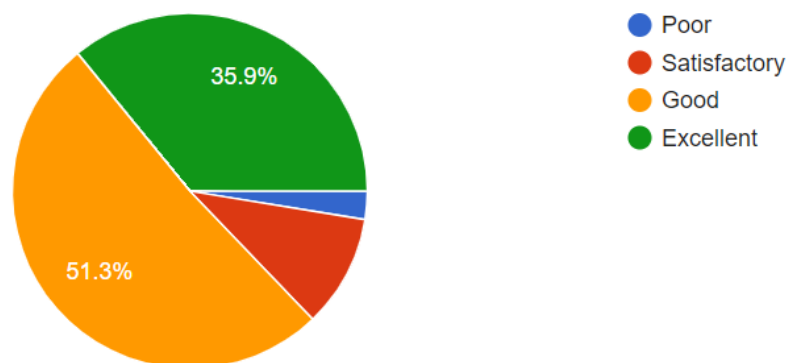


SIG	Good and Excellent
Problem Solving	80,1%
Ethnomathematics (including IKS)	77,0%
PrimTed (Geometry and Measurement)	75,0%
Academic Writing	87,0%

There is no doubt that Special Interest Groups such as the ones in the above table are very popular with AMESA members with most participants indicating a Good or Excellent rating for the SIG they attended.

13. Parallel Sessions

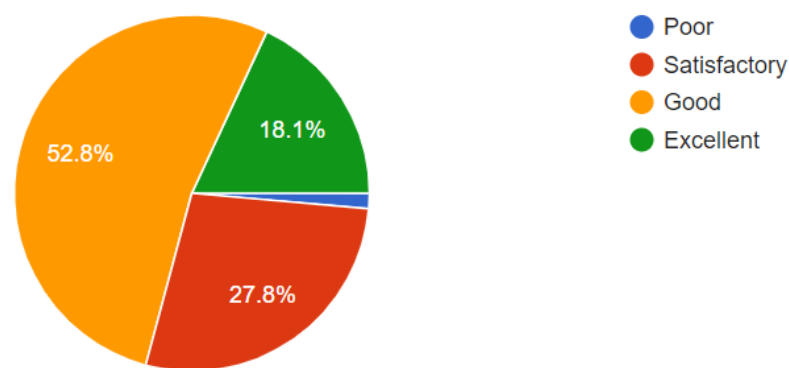
There were 9 parallel sessions, with each session comprising up to 10 presentations. Included in the parallel sessions were Phase Committee meetings and Special Interest Groups. Thus, in total there were 74 such presentations/meetings in the parallel sessions.



87,2% of the respondents indicated that the parallel sessions were good to excellent. The quality of the presentations were excellent and some of the comments about the sessions were:

- Attending sessions which were appropriate to the teaching interests
- Attending sessions which were appropriate to their research interests
- Participating in math market sessions and competitions
- The different SIG sessions and phase committee meetings

14. Annual General Meeting



The AGM took place on the afternoon of 15 July 2021, starting at 16:00 and lasting until 18:00. It would appear that the delegates were happy with the arrangements with approximately 71% indicating good/excellent when rating the AGM

15. Future Congresses

Most respondents were clearly happy with the Congress arrangements for 2021. They believed that if the COVID-19 situation is not brought under control then the Congress 2022 should also be virtual/online with more features of Microsoft Teams being used.

16. Other comments

A few additional comments are included here:

- This technology has once more showed us that nothing is impossible, we really need to embrace technology as it is assisting us in improving our daily lives
- May AMESA continue to develop teachers
- Well done on putting together a complicated and interesting program.
- It was really informative and great. Thank you I learnt a lot
- Well done on a superb Congress. I just cannot rave enough about it. Thank you!
- It; Excellent Virtual Congress! I'm grateful to be part of such an amazing, informative and first of its kind online Congress. s great that it was a success.
- Thank you AMESA for this 1st ever virtual congress. I really enjoyed the sessions I attended

- Well organized inaugural virtual conference by Gauteng LOC and NOC keep up the good work
- The Congress reach its objective, which was to focus on the 4IR in mathematics

17. Concluding Remarks

Based on the feedback on around 25% of the attendees at AMESA's 26th National Annual Congress, there is no doubt that AMESA's first attempt at an online Congress was success. Further, it is recommended that should the COVID-19 situation in South Africa get better and face-to-face conferences/meetings be allowed, then the possibility of having a hybrid set-up (a combination of virtual and in-person attendance) should be investigated.