

## **Participant Feedback from IAPT Pretoria Conference**

### **Question One: Overall Balance of the Programme.**

The vast majority of respondents were happy with the overall balance of the conference schedule and several commented upon its excellent balance, However, a significant number of respondents (40%) named specific issues related to programme balance that had been problematic for them and 10% of respondents were unhappy with the balance of the programme overall. Although many of the comments on programme balance reflect individual preferences there were a cluster of concerns shared by several participants. These included:

- The number of groups scheduled in parallel sessions. Many respondents felt that they had problems choosing which sessions to attend and that the number of participants in many groups were too small. It was suggested that chairs should be appointed for all sessions.
- A number of participants felt that the programme was too demanding particularly as it was difficult for participants themselves to elect to take 'time out' due to organizational constraints and contextual factors.
- Several participants raised issues concerning the field trip including the time allocated to the various activities and the demanding schedule overall.

### **Question Two: Programme Structure and Process (theme, plenary sessions, workshops, working groups, discussion).**

Again the majority of people found the programme structure and process worked satisfactorily for them enabling good engagement with the themes of the conference. However, despite overall approval there were a cluster of concerns around key topics:

- *Plenary Sessions.* They key concerns mentioned were the relevance to the conference topic, the amount of time allocated to plenaries in a busy programme; the lack of meaningful discussion after plenaries and the danger that individuals can dominate conversations; the lecture theatre setting.
- *Workshops.* The key concerns were as for question one namely the number of workshops in parallel sessions and the low attendance at some groups.
- *Theme:* There was mixed response to the theme of Ubuntu. Some found it helpful and creative to engage with a topic unfamiliar to them. Others found it more difficult to work with this theme.

### **Question Three: Pre-conference information, registration and scholarships.**

There was overwhelming satisfaction with the pre-conference information and the processes for registration and administration of scholarships. Around 20% of respondents found the information a little complicated or simply rather overwhelming but many others congratulated the organisers on their efficiency, hospitable approach and attention to detail.

### **Question Four: Venues, Transportation, Food, Accommodation, On-site Information.**

Many respondents took time to give a nuanced response to this question. There was overwhelming satisfaction with the hospitality and the sense of community this

generated. The food was widely appreciated as was the care with which it was provided. The host/guest relationship was deeply appreciated by many. There were a cluster of concerns around other issues:

- The Hotel was felt to be rather expensive for some participants and a number of those staying in guest-houses raised issues concerning transport and a sense of isolation.
- Whilst appreciating the reasons for two venues the shift in location towards the end of the conference did not work well for a number of respondents – particularly with a very early start after a busy day.
- It was recognised that there were unavoidable logistical problems entailed with holding the conference in Pretoria. A number of respondents mentioned security issues and the way these had impacted upon their personal schedules. However, these remarks were not made in a critical way but simply as an acknowledgement of challenges.

#### **Question Five: Social and Cultural Aspects: Meals, Cultural Visits, Meeting and Greeting etc.**

Once again the responses to this question were thoughtful and nuanced:

- The name tags and gifts to delegates were deeply appreciated by many and set a tone for them of welcome and inclusion.
- Meals were very widely appreciated and some delegates registered a desire to see more evening meals taken together.
- A number of respondents were very happy with the cultural expedition and registered satisfaction at an introduction to the context of post-apartheid (around 13%) South Africa. However, for a significant number of respondents (around 25%) the trip had been an ambivalent experience that had not been sufficiently ‘unpacked’ within the conference itself. For these respondents the experience at the Voortrekker Monument had been problematic and the time at the Apartheid Museum too short.
- A number of respondents registered their wish to see more attention given to the welcoming of new members and the desirability of a mixer session on the first evening.

#### **Question Six: Business Meetings and the Life of the Academy.**

Overall it was thought that the business sessions were well organised, efficiently run and (for business meetings!) reasonably engaging. Clusters of concern emerged around:

- The need for the organisation to become more open and participatory
- The need to continue to produce scholarship at the cutting edge. A few respondents wished to re-emphasise this as the central ‘vocation’ of the Academy.
- It was recognised that business sessions were demanding and required the active preparation of members.

### **Question Seven: Timing of the Conference.**

Most respondents recognised this to be a perennial problem. Many North American respondents preferred July whilst many Europeans preferred April. The numbers who stated a preference were equally balanced in favour of both months!

### **Question Eight: What Is Most Valued in Conference.**

Most respondents listed more than one thing they valued greatly and a remarkably uniform picture emerged from our survey:

- Half the respondents named the chance to meet colleagues, network, form friendships and share with those working in a similar discipline as a thing they valued greatly
- Half the respondents referred to the international aspect of the conference as a great asset. This international aspect included the opportunity to learn about a wide range of contexts by visiting different locations but also included hearing the insights and concerns of those working in different locations.
- Just under half of respondents mentioned the scholarly nature of the conference as being of great value. These respondents referred to the opportunity conferences provided to encounter new academic ideas and engage with innovative research.

Other items of value listed by respondents included: opportunity to share in worship informed by context; the feeling of being part of a faith-based community; IAPT publications, IAPT's commitment to social justice.

### **Question Nine: What Can We Learn from Pretoria?**

Not all respondents wished to offer comments on this topic. Some clusters of concerns emerged. A number of respondents asked that we:

- Elect one conference venue.
- Understand how important affordability is for many members and make efforts to keep costs low, facilitate joint room bookings, ensure transport links are effective to cheaper venues.
- Make opportunities for rest alongside a busy programme.
- Take strenuous efforts to encourage members to meet each other through welcoming, mixing sessions, shared meals etc.
- Seek to make discussions more participatory.
- Work towards inclusivity and sustain a 'human touch' in all our activities.

One respondent expressed a desire for Sunday morning worship together and another that we do not have any field trips.

Heather Walton  
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