

International Statistical Education Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

The International Statistical Institute has been increasingly concerned with educational matters in recent years; the article by J.Gani, the present chairman of the Education Committee, in the International Statistical Review for December 1979, gives an extended account of the developments up to 1979. One of the developments since that article was written concerns the Advisory Task Force on Statistical Education: at the 1979 Session in Manila it concluded that its immediate aims had been achieved and consequently presented a final report before being dissolved. One of the main recommendations of this report was that some form of publication, such as a newsletter, should be created to allow easy and direct circulation of information about educational matters to ISI members and others. This is the first issue of a newsletter, which grew from that recommendation. It will appear twice a year initially; its size will, at the start, be rather limited, but in the longer run will reflect the amount of material available that is likely to be of interest to readers.

The subject matter is *Statistical Education*, and the only real limitation (aside of course from that of space) is that anything published must be of interest to (some of) the readers. Regular items will include reports from the Task Forces and news items from round the world such as announcements of, or reports from, conferences. Articles will be published, but because of space restrictions, and because this is a newsletter rather than a full-scale journal, they can scarcely exceed 500 words in length, and will need to be concerned with rather general questions: offers of such articles, which are perhaps to be compared with Comment columns that appear in some newspapers, will be most welcome.

The point implicit in the last invitation is an important one. We - the Education Committee, the Task Force, and the Editor - are all in our own ways trying to advance the cause of statistical education, and are pleased, indeed anxious, to receive comments, suggestions, and so on. As far as this Newsletter is concerned it means that relevant news items are welcome and solicited and that a Letters to the Editor section will come into existence as soon as any letters arrive that ought to be printed. But it also has other implications: for example the Task Force on the Teaching of Statistics at School Level and the Task Force on Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics have at their disposal a considerable amount of information and experience relevant to curriculum developments and program evaluations in various countries, and their chairmen would be glad to receive requests for assistance and, more generally, suggestions as to how this can best be made more widely available.

The ISI rightly considers statistical education to be one of its most important concerns and the setting up of this newsletter is an expression of that concern. Its success and its value depend to a significant extent on responses from the readership.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee was reorganised at the 1977 ISI Session in New Delhi, and four Task Forces were set up. One was dissolved at the 1979 meeting in Manila, and following a recommendation from that dissolved Task Force, a new Task Force was created (the last in the following list). Although some of these details have been given in various issues of International Statistical Information, they are repeated here for completeness.

TASK FORCE ON THE TEACHING OF STATISTICS AT SCHOOL LEVEL (TOTSAS)

Chairman: V.Barnett (Department of Probability & Statistics, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S3 7RH, U.K.). Other members: H.Dinges (F.R.of Germany); J.B.Douglas (Australia); P.L.Hennequin (France); R.V.Hogg (USA); G.Kallianpur (USA); K.Krickeberg (France); H.Midzuno (Japan); B.I.Penkov (Bulgaria); A.E.Sarhan (Egypt); S.Tulya-Muhika (Uganda).

The brief of TOTSAS at its foundation was to monitor, review and advise on matters relating to the teaching of statistics at school level throughout the world and its membership was widely chosen to reflect different interests and different geographic areas.

TOTSAS held a major policy meeting in The Hague in the Spring of 1978 and identified various objectives. Two major areas of interests were as follows.

1. The first concerned the preparation and publication of an International Report to describe the current situation in a large number of different countries and to indicate development and proposals for change in the light of the prevailing educational systems.
2. The second involved maintaining contact with the proposed new journal Teaching Statistics being published in the U.K. and of which the ISI was one of the sponsors.

International Report

Members of TOTSAS agreed to review the situation in their country and to prepare a report on current activities and future prospects as they saw them. Each of the members also agreed to solicit material from other countries written by individuals whom they judged to be appropriately knowledgeable. Through these sources and further ad hoc contact a large number of contributed commentaries are now available: Argentina, Australia, England and Wales, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, Uganda and other East African States, USA and Canada.

The Chairman is acting as Editor for the material and it is intended that the whole Report will be prepared for publication in the Spring 1981. It is likely that it will be published through UNESCO or directly by the ISI and will be circulated as widely as possible.

Teaching Statistics

This new journal has had a relatively successful first two years of operation and has already established an international market. Although most of the material relates to the situation in the U.K. regular articles on overseas

matters appear and at least 2% of the subscribers are from outside the U.K. TOTSAS involvement with the journal arises at various levels. As the only major journal on teaching statistics at school level it obviously provides much background information to aid in TOTSAS work. Also TOTSAS is represented in the sense that its Chairman is a member of the Teaching Statistics Trust and as such safeguards the ISI interest in the journal. More specific action involves efforts to disseminate the journal more widely outside the U.K. To this end proposals are in hand for the preparation of abstracts in different languages and for their circulation and it is hoped that such a facility may be developed in the not too distant future. One detailed example of wider dissemination arises in West Germany where Professor Eicker of Dortmund University has (with some financial assistance from the ISI) already translated two complete issues of the journal and distributed them to high schools in West Germany. There are hopes of establishing a market for a German edition, or at least ensuring that selected translated articles appear regularly through the various current publications in the country.

TASK FORCE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE TEACHING OF STATISTICS

Chairman: L.Råde (Sweden). Other members: P.Holmes (UK); B.L.Joiner (USA); M.N.Murthy (Japan); B.I.Penkov (Bulgaria); G.E.Noether (USA); J.O.Oyelese (Nigeria); R.Zielinski (Poland).

The Task force met in Gothenburg, Sweden, in April, 1980, and outlined details for the planned First International Conference on the Teaching of Statistics. The conference is aimed at persons concerned with education and training in statistics. The emphasis in

the conference will be on teaching statistics 1) at the school level, 2) in college-level courses for non-statisticians, 3) for practitioners in government and industry, 4) in teacher training courses, and 5) in developing countries.

Various aspects of teaching statistics including course contents, course material, use of calculators and computers and case studies will be considered. The conference will consist of sessions of invited papers, contributed papers, workshops and interest group discussions.

The overall objective of the conference is to improve the quality of statistics teaching on a world-wide basis. Key goals include fostering international cooperation among teachers of statistics and promoting the interchange of ideas about teaching materials, method and content. Every effort has been made to keep costs to participants at a minimum.

The conference will have plenary sessions, invited papers, contributed papers, workshops, special interest groups, and exhibits. National coordinators have been or will be assigned to publicise the conference, to organise national delegations, to encourage individual participants and to explore funding possibilities.

TASK FORCE ON COORDINATION OF STATISTICAL TRAINING CENTRES

Chairman: M. Benyaklef (Morocco)

A report on activities will be given in the next issue.

TASK FORCE ON TERTIARY AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN STATISTICS

Chairman: R.M. Loynes (UK)

A report on activities will be given in the next issue.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONFERENCE ON TEACHING OF STATISTICS AND STATISTICAL CONSULTING

held at Ohio State University, Ohio, USA, 24-25 November 1980.

(The proceedings of the conference are to be published. The following brief report is condensed with permission from a fuller account by J. Gani to be published in CSIRO DMS Newsletter.)

This conference occupied two full days. The speakers and their subjects were as follows.

Graduate programs in statistics:

R.G.Cornell (Michigan) Content and scope of graduate programs in statistics; S.Geisser (Minnesota) Thoughts on graduate programs in statistics; W.G.Hunter (Wisconsin) The practice of statistics or the real world: an idea whose time has come?

Teaching service courses and short courses in statistics:

J.L.Folks (Oklahoma State) (no title available); L.H.Koopmans (New Mexico) A new introductory course in statistics; D.G.Watts (Queens) A task analysis approach to designing a regression analysis course; A.Dean (Ohio State) Teaching statistics at the Open University, England.

Training Statisticians for employment in industry and government:

J.Gani (CSIRO) Consulting and research in the CSIRO Division of Mathematics & Statistics; D.Hogben (National Bureau of Standards) Statistician responsibilities vis-à-vis the computer; W.J.Kennedy Jr. (Iowa State) The statistical computing portion of a graduate education program in statistics; L.E.Moses (Stanford) Preparing statisticians for government careers. The role of statistical consulting in graduate training:

L.D.Calvin (Oregon State) Experience with a student consulting service; B.L.Joiner (Wisconsin) Practising statistics, or what they forget to say in the classroom;

G.Van Belle (Washington) Some aspects of teaching statistical consulting.

There were, in addition, panel discussions for each topic and a number of contributed papers. It will be clear that the program contained many interesting talks but that a number of areas of statistical education, including teaching at the secondary level, statistics for the layman, the general role of statistics in society, and (with the exception of Prof.Peter Tan's (Carleton U) contributed paper on "Teaching statistics in a developing country") the place of statistics in the underdeveloped world were clearly outside the scope of the present Conference.

TEACHING STATISTICS

This recently established journal, addressed to those who teach statistics to 9-19 year olds, is now entering its third year of publication. The contents of the latest issue (Volume 3, No.1, January 1981) are as follows.

- R.W.Madsen 'Making Students Aware of Bias'
- D.E. Turner 'Statistics Across the Curriculum'
- A.P.Shulte 'The Birth and Development of a Yearbook on the Teaching of Statistics & Probability'
- D.Wilkie 'Birthdays and Breakdowns Revisited'
- R.W.Jernigan 'A Useful Display of a Normal Population'
- M.W.Maxfield 'Sixteen Left Feet'
- P.J. Wallis 'A Tribute to Jack Selkirk'
- Book Reviews; Letters; News and Notes.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE TEACHING OF STATISTICS

This, as the first ever full-scale international conference on the subject, will be important. Information about the conference can be obtained from ICOTS Secretary, Department of Probability & Statistics, The University, Sheffield S3 7RH, England.