

TEACHING STATISTICS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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This session is organized by M. Benyaklef (from the Institute of Statistics in Morocco). ICOTS I was a successful conference and ICOTS II should be an even better conference thanks to experiences drawn from the first preparations meetings, and discussions. For example, a well supported suggestion out of ICOTS I was that invited papers should leave ample time for discussion. Another suggestion was to limit the size of groups involved in workshops. We, at this session on "teaching statistics in developing countries" should take this into account as much as possible.

Developing countries encounter peculiar problems in their teaching of statistics. For example, should we emphasize the learning of theoretical tools like mathematical models and theorems or teach the more practical aspects of statistical field work. The latter approach seems to be predominant, but some educators are more of the opinion that theory is essential for a sound practice. Besides, when a tough problem is encountered by the statistician in a developing country, he has only himself practically to ask questions to as opposed to the case of developed countries where there are many specialists to turn to for various areas. The debate between defenders of theory and the believers in more practice is an important one.

The objective of the present session is to discuss issues such as the above. Several papers will introduce key ideas. We expect to have a paper by R. Andrianasolo (from the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis-Abeba), on "training African Statisticians" which should clarify many problems and issues encountered by existing training centers in Africa. Another paper by R.P. Mentz should summarize the situation in education and statistical training in Latin America. An additional paper on African teaching of statistics is expected from A. Taube (University of Sweden). The invited paper session should close with a paper by K. Lam on teaching statistics in secondary schools of Hong Kong.

With a 10-minute presentation for each paper, there should be ample time for discussion especially that other experiences of developing countries exist elsewhere and are not covered by the above mentioned speakers. The Panel session organized by L. Diop (from Senegal, also Director of CESD, Paris) should give another opportunity for exchange of ideas. A presentation of a general nature of teaching programs in statistics is expected from R.M. Loynes (from the University of Sheffield, England). Other presentations can be given in this framework according to availability of time.

The Workshop session should avoid becoming a paper session. Its leaders could gear participants toward the issues or case studies which appear to be of special interest after the discussions in the paper and panel sessions. This session is not reserved for statisticians or teachers from developing countries only. On the contrary! It is hoped that other nationals

would contribute their ideas and experiences to the presentations and discussions. This is an International conference, and this is precisely where broadly scattered views enrich each other with a positive feedback for everyone.

Actually attendance from nationals of developing countries might be low due to financial reasons and due also to the fact that statistical education is not yet as widely spread as it should.

Participants are kindly requested to submit in writing the summary of their questions and comments whenever they feel that the issue is important enough to be included in the reports and whenever possible.

The conclusions drawn from this session are expected to be useful to program designers, education deciders, international organizations interested in statistical training, etc. . . . : Exchanging information is a first step toward understanding each other's approach and toward cooperation which is beneficial to all. ICOTS II aims at winning the issues involved in international cooperation for a better teaching of statistics throughout the World.