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Contents

Part 1: EUROPE

CHAPTER 1 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (by R.M. Loynes)

1.1 The Educational Framework 1
1.2 Higher Education in General 2
1.3 Statistics in Higher Education 3
1.4 Other Routes to Qualifications 4
1.5 Varieties of Statistician and their Background 4
1.5.1 Official Statisticians 4
1.5.2 Commercial/Financial Statisticians 5
1.5.3 Industrial/Technological Statisticians 5
1.5.4 Biological/Agricultural Statisticians 6
1.5.5 Academic Statisticians 6
1.6 Continuing Education 6

Appendix I Undergraduate Programme at University of Sheffield 7
Appendix II M.Sc. Programme at University of Sheffield 8
Appendix III Qualifications conferred by the Institute of Statisticians 9

CHAPTER 2 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (by A. Donda and G. Forbrig)

2.1 The Uniform System of Accountancy and Statistics in the GDR 11
2.2 Basic Features of the Integrated Educational System of the GDR 13
2.3 Training Skilled Workers in Accountancy and Statistics 14
2.4 Studies at Technical Colleges of Accountancy and Statistics 14
2.5 University and College Courses in Accountancy and Statistics 15
2.6 Further Education (Advanced Courses) in the Field of Accountancy and Statistics 16
2.7 Concluding Remarks 18

Part 2: NORTH AMERICA

CHAPTER 3 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA (by R.A. Bradley)
CONTENTS

3.1 Background 19
3.1.1 Demographic and Geographic Information 19
3.1.2 Educational Systems 19
3.2 Training in Statistics 23
3.2.1 Overview 23
3.2.2 Prior Training and Graduate Admission 25
3.2.3 The Statistics Masters Degree 26
3.2.4 The Statistics Doctoral Degree 26
3.2.5 Statistical Consulting 27
3.3 Professional Statistical Activities 28

Part 3: AUSTRALASIA

CHAPTER 4 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN AUSTRALIA
(by J.B. Douglas)

4.1 Background 29
4.2 Statistical Education in Schools 29
4.3 Statistical Education at Tertiary Level 30
4.4 Employment of Statisticians 31
4.4.1 Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education 31
4.4.2 Research Organisations 31
4.4.3 Industry 31
4.4.4 Agriculture and Biology 32
4.4.5 Commerce and Business 32
4.4.6 Australian Bureau of Statistics 32
4.4.7 Insurance and Actuarial Studies 33
4.5 Professional Societies 33
Appendix I Typical Structure of a Bachelor's Degree Programme in Statistics 34
Appendix II Master of Statistics Programme at the University of New South Wales 35

Part 4: AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD

CHAPTER 5 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN JORDAN
(by M.A. Hamdan and M.S. Abu-Saleh)

5.1 Introduction and Summary 37
5.2 The Educational System in Jordan 37
5.3 Statistical Education at the School Level 38
5.4 Statistical Education in Community Colleges 38
5.5 Statistical Education at the University Level 39
5.5.1 University of Jordan 39
5.5.2 Yarmouk University 40
5.6 Statistical Education at the Statistical Training Centre 40
5.7 Some Concluding Remarks 41
References 42

PART 5: SOUTH AMERICA

CHAPTER 6 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN MOROCCO
(by M. Benyaklef)

6.1 The Education System 43
6.2 Statistics at an Elementary Level 43
6.3 Government Statisticians 44
6.4 Statisticians in the Private Sector 44
6.5 Academic Statisticians 45
6.6 Specialised Statisticians 45
6.7 Professional Societies 45

CHAPTER 7 THE TASK OF TRAINING STATISTICIANS IN NIGERIA
(by B. Ajonja)

7.1 Introduction 47
7.2 The Educational System 47
7.3 The Statisticians and Early Beginnings 48
7.4 Institutional Framework 48
7.5 Degree Programmes 49
7.6 Short-term Specialised Training 50
7.7 Postgraduate Training 51
7.8 Coordination and Standards 51
7.9 The Task 52
References 52

CHAPTER 8 THE TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN ARGENTINA
(by R.P. Mentz and V. Sonvico)

8.1 Introduction: The Argentine Educational System 53
8.2 Approach followed in this Presentation 54
8.3 The Master's Degree in Biometry at INTA 55
8.4 The Graduate Programs at the University of Tucumán 56
8.5 The Doctoral Program in Mathematics at the University of Buenos Aires 57
8.6 The Undergraduate Program at the University of Rosario 57
8.7 Statistical Information about the Centers 58
8.8 Fellowships for Graduate Work 58
8.9 The Argentine Statistical System and INDEC 59
8.10 Statisticians at Work 60
8.11 Role of the Argentine Statistical Society 61
8.12 Research Activity and Publications 61
8.13 Discussion, Summary and Conclusions 61
References 63

CHAPTER 9 THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF STATISTICIANS IN BRAZIL
(by P.A. Morettin)

9.1 Introduction 65
9.2 The Educational Framework 65

The Training of Statisticians Round the World, 1987, Edited by R. M. Loynes
CHAPTER 1

The Training of Statisticians in the United Kingdom

R.M. LOYNES UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

1.1 THE EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The United Kingdom consists of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are of course cultural differences between these countries, and indeed within them, and some legal and administrative separation between them – for example the Scottish school educational system has rather different features from that of England, and the tradition in Scottish universities is also somewhat different. Nevertheless, compared to many, it is rather homogeneous. The population (1981 Census) is 56,300,000.

Education at Primary and Secondary levels has been free and compulsory for many years: at present it is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16, promotion from one year to the next being automatic. The traditional pattern for state education has been for primary education to be organised on a general basis from ages 5 to 10, with a transfer to secondary school at age 11, where the programme is organised on a subject basis. These secondary schools might or might not take pupils beyond the compulsory stage, up to age 18. More recently considerable variety has arisen, with, in some cases, Middle schools catering for the age range of about 8 to 12, followed by senior schools. The great majority of schools are now ‘comprehensive’, admitting pupils of all abilities from the neighbourhood. The post-16 situation has changed too, with the setting up in some areas of sixth-form colleges (to cater for largely academic students) or in a few cases tertiary colleges (to deal with the whole range of academic, vocational and technical needs of the 16 to 18 year olds). Moreover growing numbers of students leave school at 16 and complete their education at Colleges of Further Education, which deal not only with their needs but also with continuing education and various types of leisure learning activities. The structure of the educational system is determined partly by the central government – which contributes the greater part of the financial support, controls the accreditation of teachers, determines pay-scales for teachers, and maintains standards via the activities of the Inspectorate of Schools – and partly by local government – which decides the location and age-range of schools in their area, and appoints the teachers. In the past curriculum has been in principle determined by the individual schools, though there has always been substantial pressure exerted on them at secondary level by the external examination system and of course some social and political