

## *Foreword*

With this volume the *International Statistical Institute* publishes its second study on statistics teaching practices around the world. Where the first volume looked at teaching statistics in schools, the present volume examines the training of statisticians in tertiary level and technical institutes.

The training of statisticians may sound a rather technical and limited subject. The reality is a great deal richer and more complex than one might suppose, reflecting in unexpected ways the historical, economic and political circumstances of the country being considered. What is perceived of as statistics in Britain differs sharply from the view of statistics in, say, the German Democratic Republic, and of course these differences are reflected in the training programmes. The problems of introducing a statistical training programme in China, or in Brazil, raise issues quite different from those of teaching statistics in Australia or the United States.

This volume is of interest, therefore, not only for its reviews of the technical content of statistics courses, but also for the insight it gives into how the technical content is shaped and modified by the social environment in which it is being taught. As such it should be of interest both to teachers of statistics, and to a wide range of statisticians interested in viewing their activities against a broader background.

On behalf of the ISI Education Committee I would like to thank Professor Loynes and the Task Force on Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics for their work in preparing this pioneering volume, and to congratulate them on their success in assembling a series of papers which vividly illustrate the differences as well as the similarities in the problems of teaching statistics around the world.

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## *Preface*

Statistics, and therefore of necessity statisticians, have played an ever-increasing part in modern society over the past few decades. One has only to think of population censuses, 5-year plans, drug-acceptance trials, quality control, and market research to realise how obsessed with numbers we have become, but few people would see any objection to this provided those who collect, interpret, and use the numbers are skilful, knowledgeable and wise. Wisdom is the consequence of a rather mysterious interaction between experience and inherent personal characteristics, but skills and knowledge generally arise out of some form of training (even if one expects them to be improved by practice and experience), and the training of statisticians is the subject of the present book.

Everyone concerned with training knows what he himself does, the majority of people know how their colleagues in the same kind of institution in the same country go about it, many have a good idea about different organisations in the same country, but few have much idea of how things are arranged in other countries. With this thought in mind the idea for the present book was conceived by the Task Force for Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics of the International Statistical Institute, so that at least a beginning could be made in exhibiting the practices of different countries – who was trained, and, in general terms, how – and contributions were therefore invited from individuals from many countries. In the event a number of those approached were unable to respond, but nevertheless a wide variety of countries is represented here.

In fact this variety is in many ways the most striking thing about the various chapters. The authors were not given detailed instructions about their contributions, since it was clear that their form and content would need to be determined by local circumstances and perceptions: one need only consider, as examples, the scale of the Chinese system, the importance of the uniform statistical and accounting system in the German Democratic Republic, and the fact that in Brazil those doing statistical work must be appropriately qualified, to appreciate how right that decision was.

The present volume, then, represents a first essay at describing the structure of statistical training in the different countries of the world. It is indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the first such attempt, and clearly can do no more than begin the laying of a foundation for that future work which will be necessary if lessons learnt in one country about how best to organise statistics training are to be transferred to others.

PREFACE

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and to those not directly involved as authors I would like to express my thanks.

But the main thanks must go to the authors, to the Chairman of the ISI Education Committee (J. Gani until September 1987, D. Vere-Jones from then on) for their encouragement; and to R. Latter of the ISI Permanent Office, who organised the transformation of the raw manuscripts into the final printed version.

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R.M. LOYNES

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