

# International Statistical Education Newsletter

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Professor R.M. Loynes, Editor  
Editorial address: ISEN,  
Department of Statistics  
University of Sheffield  
Sheffield S3 7RH, UK

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## EDITORIAL

The Editor is always pleased when he has too much material to print. For ISEN this happened for the first time in the last issue, and so the report on the ISI Education Committee was held back: it appears below.

The other main items concern two aspects of statistical training in Africa. It is quite clear from these, and from a number of previous articles or notes on the STPA published in ISEN, that there is a great deal of activity in Africa. Different parts of the world have quite different needs, but there must be some developments occurring, and the Editor would be very pleased to hear of them.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Following meetings of the Education Committee during the 44th Session of ISI in Madrid, the Chairman, J. Gani, reviewed activities during the period 1981 to 1983 as follows:

The past two years have been a busy period of consolidation, as well as of radically new developments for the ISI Education Committee. The three Taskforces on

- A. International Conferences on Teaching Statistics  
(Chairman: L. Råde)
- B. Teaching Statistics at School Level  
(Chairman: V. Barnett)
- C. Tertiary and Technical Education in Statistics  
(Chairman: R.M. Loynes)

have managed to maintain a high level of activity on very limited budgets.

The main thrust of Taskforce A was directed towards the planning of the First International Conference on the Teaching of Statistics (ICOTS 1) for which it served as the Programme Committee. The meeting, held in Sheffield in August 1982, proved a great success. It was attended by just under 500 participants from all over the world. Planning for ICOTS 2 in 1986 has already begun, and its venue is to be the University of Victoria, British Columbia; the Programme Committee Chairman is R. Hogg of the University of Iowa and the Local Organising Committee Chairman is J. Swift of Nanaimo, B.C. A Round Table Conference on the impact of calculators and computers on the teaching of statistics is also planned for Canberra in August 1984, in conjunction with the Fifth International Conference in Mathematical Education (ICME 5) in Adelaide, Australia.

Taskforce B has continued with its numerous activities in statistical education for schools. It has issued a Newsletter, has remained closely involved in the publication of the magazine "Teaching Statistics", and

has produced a volume on "Teaching Statistics in Schools Throughout the World" which has had an excellent reception. Professor Barnett and his group of co-workers in Sheffield were the local organisers of ICOTS 1 and their careful planning ensured its success. They have recently issued the Proceedings of the Conference in 2 Volumes. A more recent achievement has been the creation of the Centre for Statistical Education in Sheffield, jointly supported by the University and Polytechnic of that city. The ISI Education Committee has expressed its strong support of this new Centre and agreed to give a modest donation to assist it in establishing itself.

Taskforce C has moved towards more regular annual activities. It has produced the International Statistical Education Newsletter (ISEN, 3 issues a year), has responded to enquiries on statistical education, and assisted with developments in Africa and S.E. Asia. Dr. Loynes will be attending the third Meeting of Directors of Centres Participating in the Statistical Training Program for Africa in November 1983. There have been moves on the issue of a revised edition of the Almanac of Statistical Training Centres, and plans for a possible Meeting of their Directors. Future activities include the preparation of a volume on "Teaching Statistics Round the World" at other than the school level, and the preparation of an International Directory of Statistical Groups, jointly with ASA.

IASS has made suggestions for joint activities in the area of education in the collection of statistical information. At ICOTS 1 in Sheffield, 1982, it was agreed that a concrete proposal for such activities, to be approved by the IASS Council should be prepared for Madrid; IASS has now charged a small committee with the preparation of a practical project in this area. The Education Committee looks forward to a plan of joint action on this important issue, and has allocated a session to IASS at ICOTS 2.

ISEC, Calcutta has now implemented many of the recommendations made in 1979; a site visit by

Dr. J. Gani is to occur in December 1983, which will result in a full report of the progress made since then. It was suggested that in future, a member of the ISI Education Committee or a member of ISI, due to visit India, might be asked to carry out a site visit on behalf of the Committee, in order to save on travel funds.

The Education Committee has long recognised that its activities must be regular and must develop continuously. To do this, it is essential that Taskforce members meet regularly to plan developments, to participate in Round Table Conferences, and to take new initiatives. For such meetings to occur, a budget far larger than the present one would be required. In the light of the Committee's

needs, one could justifiably recommend a increase of the Education budget; this may well be if the activities planned with IASS are to f

To conclude: the Education Committee, despite modest subvention from UNESCO, has consolidated extended its activities during the past 2 years. Chairmen and members of the Taskforces have worked and made valuable contributions to statistical education through Conferences, publications and other activities. The Committee is poised on the exciting new developments; greater financial would make them a reality.

J. Gani, Chairman, ISI Education Committee

## REPORTS FROM ROUND THE WORLD

### THIRD MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF CENTRES PARTICIPATING IN

#### THE STPA

The first meeting of directors took place at the headquarters of the ECA in Addis Ababa in 1979; the second meeting, which was reported in ISEN No.3 (February 1982), was held in Addis Ababa in November 1981. The third meeting, of similar structure, took place, again in Addis Ababa, from 31 October to 4 November, 1983. As before, in addition to the Directors themselves, representatives of donor organisations, and a number of observers, including one from the ISI, were present.

The meeting reviewed progress to date, considered current activities, and went on to look at the future. Some concerns remain as before: it was again emphasised that the main barrier to statistical self-sufficiency for the African region lies in the problem of 'the training of trainers'; and much discussion about how this problem

### STUDY OF THE NEEDS FOR STATISTICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Miss J. Church, now in the U.K. Central Statistical Office, but attached at the time of the study to the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) on leave from the U.K. Overseas Development Administration, writes:

The Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) was started in 1978 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with the objective of providing the region with a permanent supply of statistical personnel. Fifteen regional training centres participated in the programme. In 1980, the ACP Council of Ministers requested financial assistance to the STPA from the European Community in the form of student fellowships at the Centres; fellowships for training lecturers; and counterpart lecturers for those being trained.

In order to formulate an effective response to this request, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) was commissioned to carry out a study to analyse the needs for statistical training in Africa over the next decade. This study had the support and assistance of the ECA, EC Member States and the ACP countries. Its objectives were:

- to heighten awareness by government authorities of the importance of statistics;
- to collect data on which to base estimates of statistics in training needs;

### SWEDISH STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION

The Association's Education Committee has begun the publication (in Swedish) of a newsletter, with L. Råde as editor. Issues 1 and 2 have appeared during 1983.

might be solved took place. Consideration was the question of whether further centres might be the STPA, and particular concern was expressed difficulties experienced by Portuguese-speaking countries. The needs for training in computer statisticians, rather than computer specialist discussed at length, and an outline syllabus put for further discussion; similarly non-spe training in demography was considered. A syllabus' for in-service (low level) train approved, an earlier version having been circulated for comments; the appointment of con for the preparation of a 'guide syllabus' professional level was discussed at length. (A most of these activities need to be dealt with differently for the two language groups - Anglophone and Francophone.)

The other large item of business was the EEC/ACP/ECA study of statistical training in Africa, reported on more fully below.

- to evaluate the resources needed to satisfy needs and how their provision might be improved in improving African statistical services.

Visits were made to the majority of the ACP countries and to each STPA centre, on which reports were prepared. Country reports analysed status of the statistical system, the employ statisticians and training patterns. Country Centre reports describe their background and activities. A summary report was also prepared which has been accepted by the European Commission and was discussed at the Third Meeting of Directors of STPA Centres, November 1983.

The main conclusions of the study were that countries must express their will to improve their statistical services devoting fellowships already at their disposal to the training of statisticians. The most important gap identified in training opportunities now available are courses for sub-professional staff, and the report recommends that highest priority should be given to developing such programmes locally. For professional training, stronger emphasis should be placed on statistical methods rather than mathematical statistics. The report recommends that practical assistance should be given to STPA centres to help them achieve their objectives. The European Commission is now considering proposals for this through, for example, provision of micro-computers and links with European universities, for STPA centres and assistance in setting up local training facilities for sub-professional staff.

ISEN Vol. 4 missing issue

The February issue of 1984 was not printed due to difficulties in making the printing deadline. It was intended that the material involved will be included in future issues.