

Data Analysis Talent Award: An Important Step Forward

Saleha Naghmi Habibullah
Kinnaird College for Women, Statistics Department
93-Jail Road,
Lahore, Pakistan
salehahabibullah@hotmail.com

1. Introduction:

The teaching of Statistics at the undergraduate and graduate levels cannot be considered complete unless the students are provided some opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations, and some experience with the handling and analysis of real-life data. The Data Analysis Talent Award (DATA) is an International Competition launched by the Department of Statistics at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, the objective being to motivate the world-wide community of students/young adults to indulge in small-scale data-analytical studies with a spirit of healthy competition.

2. History:

The prevalent system of statistical education in Pakistan is largely textbook-oriented, and there is little room for small-scale statistical projects involving collection and analysis of real-data. The Department of Statistics at Kinnaird College began its very first effort in this direction back in May 1985 when a group of BA/BSc Final Year students was invited by the author to carry out a sample survey within the college (Habibullah S.N., 1992). Eversince 1990-91, the Kinnaird Inter-collegiate Statistical Competition (KISC) has been providing students of various colleges with an opportunity to carry out small-scale data-based studies (Habibullah, 1992, 1994). The past eight years have witnessed a number of innovations aimed at improving the students' data-analytical skills as well as raising the standard of the competition (Habibullah 1994, 1999). The "Ordinary Level" of KISC (which was conceived in 1990-91 and invited students to present the findings of their statistical studies in the form of colorful and attractive posters) led to KISC "Advanced Level" in 1996 (where *teams* of teachers and students were invited to carry out comprehensive surveys and present their work in the form of full-fledged reports), and in 1997-98, the scope of KISC "A" Level was expanded to include the *world-wide* community of students/young adults, and the competition was given the title "Data Analysis Talent Award".

3. Methodology:

Rules and regulations of the "Data Analysis Talent Award" were devised and disseminated to the Statistics Departments of *numerous* universities all over the world through ordinary mail as well as electronic mail. Competitors (aged 18-26) were required to work either individually or in the form of teams consisting of a maximum of six persons (with or without the supervision/guidance of an expert/professor) and to carry out a data-based project pertaining to either primary or secondary data. The last date for the receipt of entries was April 30, 1998.

4. Response Received:

It is common knowledge that any new initiative involving effort, dedication and commitment takes *time* to be generally accepted and to gain popularity. DATA 1998 received a total of ten entries, nine from various institutions of Pakistan and one from Italy. All ten of these entries pertained to Category I, and all the teams sent reports based on collection and analysis of primary data. Studies were conducted on a variety of topics,

including analyses of data pertaining to psychological/medical problems as well as business-oriented surveys.

5. Procedure for Evaluation & Conferment of the Award:

Prof. Ramesh C. Gupta (University of Maine, USA), Dr. Derrick Tracy (University of Windsor Canada) and Dr. Ashraf Chaudhry (University of the Punjab, Pakistan) acted as the panel of international judges for the DATA competition. The Italian entry entitled “The Burn-Out Syndrome in Helping Profession” (a study conducted by Ms. Laura Marrone under the supervision of Dr. Dario Gregori and Pier Giorgio Gabassi of the University of Trieste) stood First followed by the entry “The Emerging Monster of Unemployment” (a survey carried out by a team of four students under the supervision of Ms. Zainab Javed of Government Post-Graduate College for Women, Rawalpindi, Pakistan). The Prize Distribution Ceremony was held during the KINNAIRD COLLEGE STATISTICS FESTIVAL on Saturday, November 14, 1998 and beautiful trophies were conferred to the proud winners.

6. Concluding Remarks

Exposure to work carried out by contemporaries belonging to various parts of the world is definitely a horizon – widening experience, and, in particular, it should be beneficial for people belonging to *developing* countries such as Pakistan. The author is confident that, in years to come, increasing popularity of this competition may be able to play a positive role in enhancing the data-analytical skills of the students/young adults belonging to various parts of the world as it will provide a *frame of reference* for all concerned — a forum that will enable each participant to assess the quality of his or her work in a *global* perspective, and to aim higher next time!

REFERENCES

- Habibullah, S. N. (1992). Efforts to Promote Project-Based Teaching of Introductory Statistics in the City of Lahore. Paper presented at the 7th International Congress of Mathematics Education (ICME 7), Quebec, Canada.
- Habibullah, S. N. (1994). Kinnaird Inter-collegiate Statistical Competition: An Endeavour to Improve the Quality of Statistical Education at the Undergraduate Level in Pakistan. Proceedings of the 5th Statistics Seminar of the University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan.
- Habibullah, S. N. (1999). Kinnaird Inter-collegiate Statistical Competition “Guided Level”: A Unique Endeavour to Train Pakistani Teachers of Statistics Regarding the Conduct of Sample Surveys Within Colleges. Paper accepted for presentation at the 6th Islamic Countries Conference on Statistical Sciences (ICCS VI), Lahore, Pakistan.

RESUME

Le Data Analysis Talent Award (DATA) est une compétition internationale lancée par le département de statistique de Kinnaird College à Lahore (PAKISTAN).

Son objectif principal étant de motiver la communauté étudiante mondiale à s'impliquer plus profondément dans un travail analytique à petite échelle, ceci dans un esprit de saine compétition et d'émulation.

L'auteur place une grande confiance en ce projet qui, dans les années à venir, de par sa popularité acquise et grandissante, permettra d'améliorer la capacité d'analyse de la communauté internationale d'étudiants en statistique, et particulièrement pour ceux des pays en voie de développement, puisque cela leur donnera l'opportunité de placer la qualité de leurs travaux dans une perspective globale, voire de l'améliorer dans le futur.