

# 1985-2000: Fifteen Years of Creativity and Innovation in the Field of Statistical Education

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Similar to many other disciplines, statistical education at the undergraduate level in Pakistan carries the old tradition of the textbook-oriented approach and, by and large, very little emphasis is laid on practical projects that would enable students to associate theoretical concepts with real-life situations (Habibullah, 1992). Ever since 1985, a variety of endeavours have been made by the Department of Statistics at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, the objective being the improvement of statistical education in the country. The following sections of this paper present an account of the various initiatives that have been taken during the past fifteen years.

## 2. SAMPLE SURVEYS CONDUCTED AT KINNAIRD COLLEGE:

In the summer of 1985, the author invited her fourth - year students to carry out a small - scale sample survey at the college. As this was the first time that such a proposal had been presented, the response of the students was that of enthusiasm and excitement, and thus began a six - month - long project that turned out to be the harbinger of an ongoing series of statistical surveys in the years to come (Habibullah, 1992).

## 3. STATISTICAL EXHIBITIONS AND COMPETITIONS:

The spring term of 1989 witnessed the holding of a statistical exhibition at Kinnaird College which was probably the first of its kind in the country. The exhibition consisted of a large number of very colourful and attractive posters containing statistical tables and diagrams pertaining to small - scale data - based projects that had been carried out by undergraduate students. The academic year 1990 - 91 saw the launching of the first Kinnaird Inter - collegiate Statistical Competition, yet another initiative that was the very first of its kind in Pakistan. During the nine years from 1991 to 2000, Kinnaird's statistical competition has grown to such an extent that it has reached the international level by the name of Data Analysis Talent Award (DATA) (Habibullah, 1999). DATA 1998 attracted nine entries from within Pakistan and one from Italy, whereas DATA 2000 attracted six entries from within the home country and four from other parts of the world

## 4. KINNAIRD COLLEGE STATISTICS FESTIVAL:

In the summer of 1992, the author conceived the idea of a series of workshops for lecturers and assistant professors of Statistics working in various intermediate and degree colleges of Pakistan. The workshop - series was launched in September 1992 by the name of Statistics Teachers Educational Program (STEP). As many as ten STEPs were accomplished by the Kinnaird College Statistics Department during a short span of only four years (Sep 1992 to Sep 1996). In 1997, the workshop - cum - exhibition was re-named as: Kinnaird College Statistics Forum for the Enlightenment of Students, Teachers, Innovators, Veterans, Amateurs and Learners (Kinnaird College Statistics FESTIVAL). FESTIVALs 1997, 1998 and

2000 attracted a large number of students, teachers and practitioners of statistics, and turned out to be truly memorable occasions!

#### 5. FUTURE PLANS:

During the next few years, the Department of Statistics at Kinnaird College plans to begin a BSc Honours program in Statistics followed by a Masters / M. Phil. Program. The author is confident that elevation to a higher level will enhance the department's ability to contribute to the uplift of statistical education and to launch projects and research - studies conducive to a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts as well as the practical application of statistics.

#### 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Working in a stereo - type educational system afflicted with major problems, it is very easy to feel ineffective and powerless to bring about any change. The other approach is to take the initiative and to try out new methods for effecting change. Is it not better to take up a challenge and to strive for new directions, rather than to tread the beaten track?! This paper has thrown light on significant contributions made by a women's college for enhancing the teaching and learning of Statistics in a highly textbook-oriented educational system and a pre-dominantly male - dominated society. Fifteen year of creative and innovative work for the promotion of statistical education seem to have brought about some change, and there now exists a higher level of awareness regarding the importance of linking statistical methodology with real, every-day life.

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