Empirical Laws and Curve-fitting

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24.1 INTRODUCTION

In many branches of applied mathematics, it is required to express a given data, obtained from observations, in the form of a *Law* connecting the two variables involved. Such a *Law* inferred by some scheme, is known as *Empirical Law*. For example, it may be desired to obtain the law connecting the length and the temperature of a metal bar. At various temperatures, the length of the bar is measured. Then, by one of the methods explained below, a law is obtained that represents the relationship existing between temperature and length for the observed values. This relation can then be used to predict the length at an arbitrary temperature.

(2) Scatter diagram. To find a relationship between the set of paired observations x and y (say), we plot their corresponding values on the graph taking one of the variables along the x-axis and other along the y-axis *i.e.* (x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), (x_n, y_n). The resulting diagram showing a collection of dots is called a *scatter diagram*. A smooth curve that approximates the above set of points is known as the *approximating curve*.

(3) Curve fitting. Several equations of different types can be obtained to express the given data approximately. But the problem is to find the equation of the curve of *'best fit'* which may be most suitable for predicting the unknown values. The process of finding such an equation of 'best fit' is known as *curve-fitting*.

If there are n pairs of observed values then it is possible to fit the given data to an equation that contains n arbitrary constants for we can solve n simultaneous equations for n unknowns. If it were desired to obtain an equation representing these data but having less than n arbitrary constants, then we can have recourse to any of the four methods : *Graphical method*, *Method of Least squares*, *Method of Group averages* and *Method of Moments*. The graphical method fails to give the values of the unknowns uniquely and accurately while the other methods do. *The method of Least squares is, probably, the best to fit a unique curve to a given data.* It is widely used in applications and can be easily implemented on a computer.

24.2 GRAPHICAL METHOD

When the curve representing the given data is a **linear law** $y = mx + c$ *; we proceed as follows :*

(*i*) *Plot the given points on the graph paper* taking a suitable *scale*.

(*ii*) *Draw the straight line of best fit* such that the points are evenly distributed about the line.

(*iii*) *Taking two suitable points* (x_1, y_1) *and* (x_2, y_2) *on the line, calculate* m, *the slope of the line and* c, *its* intercept on y-axis.

When the points representing the observed values do not approximate to a straight line, a smooth curve is drawn through them. From the shape of the graph, we try to infer the law of the curve and then reduce it to the form $y = mx + c$.

.3 LAWS REDUCIBLE TO THE LINEAR LAW

We give below some of the laws in common use, indicating the way these can be reduced to the linear form uitable substitutions :

(1) *When the law is* $y = mx^n + c$.

Taking $x^n = X$ and $y = Y$ the above law becomes $Y = mX + c$

(2) *When the law is* $y = ax^n$.

Taking logarithms of both sides, it becomes $\log_{10} y = \log_{10} a + n \log_{10} x$

Putting $\log_{10} x = X$ and $\log_{10} y = Y$, it reduces to the form $Y = nX + c$, where $c = \log_{10} a$.

(3) *When the law is* $y = ax^n + b \log x$.

Writing it as $\dfrac{y}{\log x} = a\dfrac{x^n}{\log x} + b$ and taking $x^n/\log x = X$ and $y/\log x = Y$,

given law becomes, $Y = aX + b$.

(4) *When the law is* $y = ae^{bx}$

Taking logarithms, it becomes $\log_{10} y = (b \log_{10} e)\, x + \log_{10} a$

Putting $x = X$ and $\log_{10} y = Y$, it takes the form $Y = mX + c$ where $m = b \log_{10} e$ and $c = \log_{10} a$.

(5) *When the law is* $xy = ax + by$.

Dividing by x, we have $y = b\dfrac{y}{x} + a$.

Putting $y/x = X$ and $y = Y$, it reduces to the form $Y = bX + a$.

Example 24.1. *R is the resistance to maintain a train at speed V; find a law of the type* $R = a + bV^2$ *nnecting R and V, using the following data :*

V (miles / hour) :	10	20	30	40	50
R (lb / ton) :	8	10	15	21	30

Solution. Given law is $R = a + bV^2$ ...(*i*)

Taking $V^2 = x$ and $R = y$, (*i*) becomes

$$y = a + bx \quad \text{...(ii)}$$

ch is a *linear law.*

Table for the values of x and y is as follows :

x	100	400	900	1600	2500
y	8	10	15	21	30

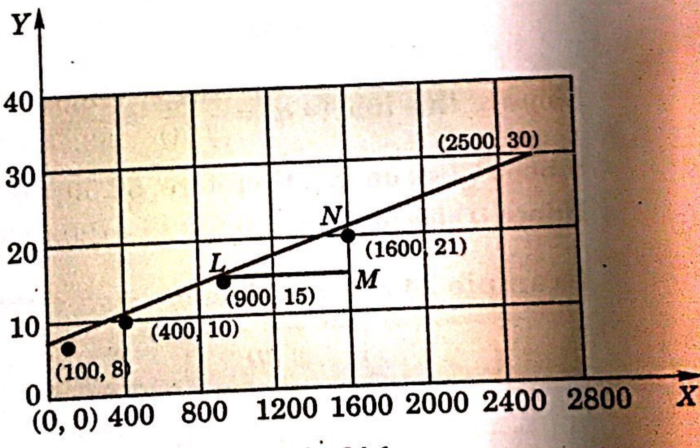

Fig. 24.1

Plot these points. Draw the straight line of best fit ugh these points (Fig. 24.1)

Slope of this line (= b)

$$= \frac{MN}{LM} = \frac{21 - 15}{1600 - 900} = \frac{6}{700} = 0.0085 \text{ nearly.}$$

Since L (900, 15) lies on (*ii*),

$$15 = a + 0.0085 \times 900,$$

$\therefore$

$$a = 15 - 7.65 = 7.35 \text{ nearly.}$$

nce

... are supposed to follow the law $y = ax^2 + b \log_{10} x$. Find