

History of CISON

1. Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (CISON) is the successor statistical body to the Nigerian Statistical Association (NSA). The NSA was established in 1976 as a non-profit making professional body comprising of Statisticians, Economists, Planners, Econometricians, Demographers, Analysts and Corporate organizations with interest in Statistics. The Association was committed to the development of statistical theory and practice in Nigeria. However, successive Governing Councils of the NSA had advocated for an Institute like CISON that would be responsible for the accreditation of statisticians in the country. Consequently, CISON was established to determine what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become members of the Institute.

In the past, a lot of efforts was put in place by past Governing Councils of the NSA towards the accreditation of members as professional statisticians. To that effect, such names as the Nigerian Statistical Institute and the Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria were bandied. Some of these efforts did not materialize due to one reason or the other. The envisaged Institute was also meant to conduct specialized trainings in statistics, conduct professional examinations, certify successful candidates in various areas of statistics and keep a roster of statistical resource persons/specialists that the nation could call upon if and when the need arises. Such an organization is also expected to provide professional advice and service, make suggestions on national issues that are statistical in nature and above all serve as a regulatory body in the practice of Statistical activities in Nigeria.

2. Concrete steps towards professionalization

However, it was not until 2001 that the first concrete steps were taken towards the establishment of a professional body for the accreditation of members of the NSA. This was under the leadership of the then President of NSA, Professor O. S. Adegboye, who launched the Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (CISON) on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of NSA held in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. The Vice President of the country, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, *GCON*, was represented on that occasion by Dr. H.O. Isu, Special Adviser to the Vice-President on Economic affairs. Prior to that event, the then Secretary of the NSA, Mr. C. M. Okafor, had obtained a copy of the *Act* of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) through the assistance of one Mr. Edward Ozochi who was working at the Supreme Court Library then. Thereafter, Prof. B. A. Oyejola in 2001 led a team that adapted the ICAN's *Act* to suit that of CISON. The move for the establishment of CISON was regarded then as NSA's humble contribution towards the advancement of the National Statistical System (NSS).

It was hoped that the enactment of the CISON *Act* would naturally key into other developmental initiatives aimed at strengthening statistical capacity and consequently, enthroning standard statistical practice in Nigeria. It would also sharpen professional education in statistics, and therefore, becomes NSA's contribution towards the various reform initiatives, which had helped in deepening the Nigerian economy. By 2004, the NSA under the leadership of the President, Mr.

Christopher M. Okafor, acquired a temporary office of CISON at the Department of Statistics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). This was because; in her quest to establish CISON, the NSA had been informed that the registration of the association with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and a permanent secretariat were prerequisites for such a venture. The then Vice-Chancellor (VC) of UNN, Prof. Ginigeme Francis Mbanefoh graciously granted NSA's request for a secretariat. However, he retired in June 2004 and the request was still approved by the new VC, Prof. Osita Chinedu Nebo. The entire process was facilitated by the then Head of Department of Statistics, UNN, Dr. W. I. E. Chukwu (Associate Professor). He also saw to it that a young statistician was recruited to man the office. With that settled the NSA finalized the draft of the CISON Act and launched a vigorous campaign for the establishment of CISON, even though the secretariat of the NSA was later moved to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Abuja.

3. Initial Public Hearing on CISON

In its efforts at realising the noble objectives of CISON and ensuring a buy-in of the general public and the members of the National Assembly, the Governing Council of the NSA, under the leadership of Mr. Christopher M. Okafor as President, organized a one-day sensitization workshop on the proposed *Act* of the CISON, on August 20, 2007, at Hill Station Hotel, Jos, Plateau State. Prominent personalities invited to the occasion included the Director-General, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Dr. V.O. Akinyosoye, who was the Chairman of the occasion; the Chairman, Senate Committee on National Planning, Economic Affairs & Poverty Alleviation; the Chairman, House Committee on National Planning & Economic Development; members of the Governing Council of the NSA; representatives of various Professional Bodies and Learned Societies; representatives of various Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); Development Partners; and Gentlemen of the Press.

In his welcome address, the President of NSA, Mr. C M. Okafor informed the audience that it had been an age-long desire of the NSA to establish a body like CISON, which would conduct examinations and accredit statisticians in Nigeria. This is because, of the belief that the realization of such a noble project would not only lead to the production of high quality statistics in Nigeria, but would also elevate the status of statisticians and empower them within the Nigerian environment and beyond. Furthermore, he noted that the focus of training in such an institute would definitely bridge the education/practice divide. He also pointed out that the mere fact that we were gathered to discuss a draft Act of the CISON was a welcome relief, when all the efforts that have been put in place by both past and then executives of the NSA towards the realization of the dream were considered. He observed that the subsisting executives of the NSA were, therefore, proud to be associated with the project at a time when Nigeria was going through a range of economic reforms. Therefore, the introduction of an institute that would sharpen professional education in statistics, becomes NSA's own contribution towards the realization of those laudable programmes, particularly, the Financial System Strategy (FSS, 2020), which was aimed at making Nigeria Africa's financial hub and one of the first 20 economies in the world by the year 2020. He observed that as market-oriented reforms broaden and economic activities deepen, the evolving financial markets would demand the production of comprehensive, timely and high quality data required for the effective and efficient management of the Nigerian economy. Under such a changing policy environment, measurement problems would heighten and pose increasing

challenges to statisticians. Requisite statistical training under the guidance of such an institute would, therefore, become a welcome development.

Continuing he argued that due to continual growth in the economies of the world and the shift towards a more knowledge-intensive economy, termed *Knowledge-based economy* (KBE), national statistics is becoming much more complex and difficult to handle. And this is simply because; strategies are adopted to increase productivity through the application of knowledge rather than through increased inputs of capital or labour. Such knowledge is accruable from information derived from numerical facts or data. An institute such as CISON would, therefore, facilitate the production of statisticians that have specialized knowledge in the production and use of high quality data. Also, the institute would bring professionalism to bear in the conduct and practice of statistics within the National Statistical System (NSS), as members would adhere to a code of conduct as enshrined in the *Act*.

The President enumerated some provisions of the *Act* and remarked that the sensitization workshop was aimed at informing all stakeholders involved in the teaching, production and use of statistics in Nigeria of the provisions of the proposed *Act* of CISON. It was also hoped that the workshop would create an opportunity for various stakeholders in the statistics profession to provide input into the proposed *Act*. Incisive comments on the draft bill were, therefore, invited. Nevertheless, it was hoped that CISON would compare favourably with its counterparts around the globe as it would conduct a suite of qualifying examinations in Statistics and accredit statisticians. He noted that up till then, Nigerians have relied mainly on the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) of London for the acquisition of this professional training. The Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria was, therefore, expected to reverse this trend. The Institute would also validate external qualifications in Statistics and assist in shaping the curriculum for the teaching of Statistics in institutions of learning in Nigeria. The successful establishment of the Institute would create a window of opportunity for the professional education of all those who by virtue of their job schedules, have found themselves in the area of statistics, by helping them obtain requisite professional qualifications, without necessarily attending traditional tertiary institutions. He, therefore, concluded that on the local scene, CISON would compare favourably and operate in line with similar professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) and the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN).

Thereafter, various syndicate groups were formed that generated meaningful contributions that enriched the draft legal framework for CISON. At the end, the President on behalf of members of the Governing Council of the NSA, thanked the Chairman of the occasion, for honouring the invitation. Special thanks were also extended to all the Honourable members of the Committee on National Planning at both the Senate and House of Representatives, for their unflinching support and cooperation with the NSA in its quest to establish the Institute. They were, therefore, considered “champions of statistics.” The comments received from participants formed the basis for the revision of the draft bill which was eventually sent to the National Assembly for deliberations. Barr. Henry Efomah of the Legal Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) assisted greatly in reviewing the draft CISON Act both before and after the workshop.

4. Subsequent Attempts at the Establishment of CISON

Successive Governing Councils of the NSA continued to pursue the passage of the CISON Bill with varying degrees of success. After succeeding Mr. Okafor as President of NSA in 2008, Mr. B. O. Amobi concluded the processes and ensured the registration of the NSA at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), as this was a prerequisite for the establishment of CISON. He continued the pursuit of the passage of the CISON Bill. However, in 2014, the Governing Council of the NSA under the leadership of the President, Dr. M. M. Tumala felt that substantial progress had been made towards the passage of the CISON Bill. This was sequel to the fact that as at that time, the Senate had received and read the Bill for the first time, while the House of Representatives had received and read the Bill a second time. A public hearing was also conducted by the House Committee on National Planning and Economic Development on July 10, 2014, implying that the Bill was set to be passed on the floor of the House, thereby drawing the establishment of CISON closer to reality.

Consequently, the Governing Council of the NSA approved in July, 2014 that Mr. C.M. Okafor be engaged as a consultant to draw up the road map for the transition of NSA to CISON. The document spelt out the terms of reference and envisaged an output in the form of a written document addressing key issues like:

1. The Structure and size of the Institute in terms of units/departments, staffing, etc.
2. Modalities for the conduct of examinations and accreditation of special training institutions/sites. The Curriculum for charter examinable courses.
3. How the various categories of NSA membership would be absorbed into CISON
4. Salaries and allowances of the President, Vice President and Registrar, and allowances of Council members
5. How CISON will be funded and sustained looking at the existing financial positions of the NSA
6. Any other items that would help the CISON effectively take off

In order to achieve those objectives, Mr. Okafor consulted widely with, and reviewed the processes of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN); Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN); Chartered Institute of Management, and the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) which partly informed the model for CISON. This was because; the Institute, when established, would function like similar self-regulating chartered institutes within the country and around the world, which are usually backed by an act of parliament. The findings were clearly documented before aligning them to the recommendations for the establishment of CISON.

The methodology adopted by the consultant involved extensive literature searching and the interview of Principal Officers, as well as administration of structured questionnaires during visits to selected chartered organisations resident within the country. In respect of the international associations, the websites of five professional statistical associations were combed for relevant information and materials were drawn extensively from these websites. However, for the local organisations, heavier reliance was placed on the outcome of the interviews, given the limited time

frame and the fact that most of the respondents were not obligated to respond to the questionnaires. Written documents related to the organisational set up were also requested for. The consultant also contacted and obtained from the University of Ibadan, the syllabus for some of the professional examinations in statistics, as some students were then being prepared to take some of the examinations conducted by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) of London. More importantly, the consultant had robust consultations with these Nigerian institutions and individuals involved in professional accreditation of their members and that shaped some of the recommendations made to NSA.

In order to have a broad overview of what obtains in other chartered statistical associations, the consultant undertook extensive desk research in which he surveyed five entities that have chartered or professional statistical bodies. These associations are the American Statistical Association (ASA), the Hong Kong Statistical Society (HKSS), the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) of London, the Statistical Society of Australia Incorporated (SSAI) and the Statistical Society of Canada (SSC). One thing found common among all of them was that their operations are guided by their charters/ constitutions and bye-laws, as well as a set of code of conduct/ethics.

Following the completion of the assignment and the subsequent validation of the report at the stakeholders' meeting held on August 8, 2015 at Lapour Hotel, Abuja, the consultant's recommendations were incorporated into the bill.

5. Final Efforts to Pass the CISON Bill at the National Assembly

Following the submission of the above report that outlined the roadmap for the transition of NSA to CISON, the NSA Governing Council, under the leadership of Dr. M. M. Tumala, fought for the passage of the CISON Bill in both houses of the National Assembly, namely, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Bill was eventually passed by the 8th National Assembly, but it became part of the 46 Bills left for the assent of the then in-coming administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. Unfortunately, it was not assented to by Mr. President and so, the new President of NSA; Prof. S. I. Onyeagu had to start the process all over again. Despite his spirited efforts, the Bill remained with the National Assembly till the expiration of his tenure as President of NSA in 2021.

6. The CISON Act

After his election as President of NSA in 2021, Dr. Ebuh, with the support of his team, pursued the passage of the CISON Bill into law with dogged determination. This effort culminated in the passage of the CISON Bill into an Act, the "Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (Establishment) Act, 2022" which was signed into law by His Excellency, Muhamadu Buhari, GCFR, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria on the 16th day of February, 2023. The CISON Act has since been published in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette No. 230, Vol. 110 of 1st March, 2023 in the City of Lagos. Under Government Notice No. 83 it is published as Act No. 38 with the Short Title of Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (Establishment) Act, 2022 at pages A761-788. With this, NSA ceased to exist but transited to the Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (CISON).

7. Inauguration of the Governing Council of CISON

To give practical expression to the new Act, the Governing Council of CISON was inaugurated on March 15, 2024 with the immediate past President of NSA, Dr. Godday U. Ebuh, and immediate Vice President, Prof. S. U. Gulumbe, transiting to become the first President and Vice President of CISON, respectively. By the provision of the Act, the President is also the Chairman of Council.

The Council consists of:

- (a) Minister responsible for Education or his representative;
- (b) Minister responsible for National Planning Commission or his representative;
- (c) Head of Service of the Federation or his representative;
- (d) Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria or his representative;
- (e) Statistician General of the Federation or his representative;
- (f) Chairman, National Population Commission or his representative;
- (g) Eight persons elected by the Institute who must be Chartered members; and
- (h) President and Vice-President of the Institute.

The appointment of the Registrar was also ratified by Council on March 15, 2024. The Registrar is Christopher M. Okafor, a two-term President of the NSA (2003 - 2008). The Registrar is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Head of Administration, as well as Secretary to Council. He is also responsible for the day-to-day running of the Institute.

