

AN EVALUATION OF THE USE OF THE CLASSIFICATION CODES –THE BAHAMAS

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT (ICSE-93)

Currently, no problems exist in using the ICSE-93. However, for national purposes, two (2) categories of the ICSE-93 were further separated in an effort to distinguish the various types of statuses that can be included in the broad categories. For example, the sub-categories government, quasi-government and private were established for the broad category of “Employees”. Additionally, a distinction was made in the category “Own-account workers” (that is, with and without hired workers). This amendment serves as a tool for The Bahamas in determining (estimating) the informal sector.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION

Presently, the Bahamas uses ISCED-97. The main section which uses this classification is Census. In the recent Census Pre-test which was conducted in August 2009, some difficulty existed in coding a few majors/fields of study. For examples, “multi- media” and “mass media” were popular majors which presented coding problems. In the Journalism and Information section, a single code which fit these examples was not found. The closest code corresponded to “Other Journalism and Information”. However, one wonders if placing these examples in this code would give a good picture of the specific types of Journalism and Information major which exist in the country.

Another example was in the field of health. There seems to be a tremendous increase in this discipline as a result of increased distance learning and new technology. For example, many colleges/universities are offering several areas of study in the lab technician field. It is very difficult to code the various types of technicians which specialize in a particular area of health. Whilst it is clear that it is impossible to have a code for each field of study, we feel that classifying all of these specialized fields in the category “Other Health Related fields“ does some injustice.

For Census 2010, we have noted that the enumerators must be trained to probe the respondent further to ascertain a description or additional information on the major stated by the respondent in cases of ambiguity. Additionally, there are so many “new” areas of study that have evolved, it would prove very beneficial if the ISCED can be revisited and possibly revised to include these new areas of study.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS (ISCO)

The Department currently uses the 2000 version of ISCO. One thing that is certain, in order for the correct code to be assigned, the description of the occupation must be specific and exact. This has been one of the major problems in coding occupations. Enumerators must ascertain description of duties/tasks and not necessarily job titles. At times, as a result of insufficient information, coders would have to contact the establishment in question in order to obtain the necessary information for coding purposes. Another area of concern is that of the renaming of occupations. For examples, we have found out that a “straddle rider” is synonymous with a “fork lifter”; a “First impression officer” is the same as a “receptionist” and a “sanitation engineer” can just be a synonym for a “janitress”. Subsequently, the coding structure must take into consideration the recent changes to very familiar occupations.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

The Business Establishment section is the main section utilizing the ISIC Rev 4 along with Labour Force and Census. As the Bahamas' first Economic Census was conducted in 2008, Rev 4 was also implemented in 2008; prior to that, ISIC Rev 3 was used. Rev. 4, from our standpoint, was established in an effort to reflect the new industries which emerged over the past 20 years. However, a few problems in coding smaller less industrialized countries such as The Bahamas still exist.

This is evident in various sections such as Section A – Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. Whilst Agriculture exists in the Bahamas to a certain extent, it is not as specialized as outlined in Rev. 4, thus resulting in coding difficulties. Due to the fact that a code does not currently exist for coding of mixed crops, that is, fruits and vegetables, an additional code was implemented for the Bahamas. (In fact, in an effort to itemize and single out certain industries, several unique Bahamian codes have been established). Further, coding of our indigenous fruits is also a great challenge. Once again, while it is understood that codes cannot be made for each item in all the countries, we feel that a code for the item “Farming, nec” would have addressed this issue thereby allowing a broad category for general uniformity within the region.

Another point of contention is the placement of some of the ISIC codes. For example, the Manufacture of soft drinks, production of mineral waters and other bottled waters (ISIC CODE 1104) and steam and air conditioning supply (ISIC CODE 3530). The Manufacturing of soft drinks; production of mineral waters and other bottled waters is in the General Category — Section C – Manufacturing. However, the production of ice is listed under ISIC 3530 – steam and air conditioning supply. It would appear that the codes for water and ice should be in the same category as they appear to be related. Finally, difficulty also exist in coding such industries as weight watches and embroidery.

CENTRAL PRODUCT CLASSIFICATION (CPC)

In preparing the supply and use tables, the National Accounts Section of the Department currently uses the CPC version 1.1. However, this section has just recently began using the CPC and therefore as they are in the initial stages, they are still in the process of learning the CPC's methodology. Initial difficulty had existed with coding such products as conch and crawfish but this difficulty has been rectified. The intention to use the revised version 2.0 exists but due to time constraints, this has not been possible at the moment.

CONCLUSION: There is no doubt that the usage of the various classification codes have proved very beneficial in disseminating statistical data. Moreover, the recent revisions have allowed for uniformity amongst countries. Consequently, the Department is committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure that the most recent revisions of all classification codes are implemented. However, in the future, it may be a good idea to ensure that all classification codes have accompanying “explanatory notes” or manuals which will provide guidelines (specific examples of inclusions and exclusions) and hence, aid in the correct mapping/assignment of codes. By so doing, ambiguity will be eliminated and the goal of applying the classification codes to the Caribbean to generate comparative regional statistics would be further enhanced and realized. In cases where explanatory notes currently exist, effort must be made to ensure that all countries are aware and able to access the notes.