

Morales-Carrion

Agenda Topic: No. I-14
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UNITED STATES DELEGATION
TO THE
SECOND MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CULTURAL COUNCIL
Lima, Peru, May 1956

POSITION PAPER

Subject: The Validation of Diplomas and Granting of Equal Credit

PROBLEM: In accordance with resolutions of the First Meeting of the Inter-American Cultural Council and of the Tenth Inter-American Conference, the Committee for Cultural Action has collected background material and made recommendations pertaining to the problem of the validation of diplomas and the granting of equal credit to courses by similar institutions from elementary through university studies. This problem, while very complex, is of great importance. Students transferring to the school system of another American republic hope to do so without serious loss of credit, and professional people trained in one country may change their residence or citizenship and need to practice their profession in a different country.

What is the U. S. position regarding the problems outlined and recommendations made in the Committee's Report (CAC-E-14):

A. With respect to the problem of permitting foreigners to practice their profession the Committee recommends that bilateral and regional agreements or arrangements be carefully studied and promoted.

B. Regarding the problem of transfers and proper placement in the school systems of the various republics the Committee recommends:

(1) that the Latin American bachiller degree and the United States high school diploma should continue to be considered as the full equivalents of one another, - and

(2) that courses satisfactorily completed in Latin America should be accepted in the United States as professional or advanced courses provided they do not repeat or duplicate courses previously taken to obtain the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees. This recommendation is made with the understanding that the final decision will always rest with the university that the student desires to attend.

U. S. POSITION:

1. That the recommendation regarding A, for bilateral or regional agreements, is sound, though in the case of the U.S. the parties to such agreements would be States, educational institutions or other agencies rather than the Federal government.

2. That recommendation No. 1 (p. IV) regarding B is desirable, in the assumption that the Bachiller degree means completion of an 11-year or a 12-year system of elementary and secondary education, or all pre-university study. The word "continue" is not wholly accurate.

3. That No. 2 (p. V) would be acceptable to United States colleges and universities only if the courses completed in Latin America were of university level. Under the terms of the first recommendation the studies completed for the bachiller degree in Latin America would be used for admission to the U.S. college and would not be considered advanced. Latin American students begin specialized professional studies upon admission to one of their universities. For this reason they frequently want college credit in the United States for some of their secondary or preparatory studies, especially to meet the pre-medical or other pre-professional requirements of U.S. colleges.

DISCUSSION:

1. The lack of uniformity in requirements for professional licensure in the United States and the autonomy of institutions of higher education make impossible any blanket agreement between the United States and another country.

2. Colleges and universities in the United States generally admit holders of the Latin American bachiller diploma on the same basis as high school graduates. (The bachillerato is a pre-university degree in most countries, representing completion of 11 or 12 years of elementary and secondary education. Sometimes, as in Chile, it is issued by the national university to secondary school graduates who pass university entrance examinations. In Brazil and Peru the bachillerato is a university degree.) This recommendation, omitting the word "continue", would be advantageous to the United States because United States high school graduates having adequate knowledge of the language of instruction could enter Latin American universities on an equal basis with the holders of bachiller diplomas. This is not now permitted in some countries. In Mexico, for example, U.S. high school graduates must take the preparatoria course (10th and 11th grades) in Mexico before admission to the university in Mexico, and there is even a tendency to equate the B.A. or B.S. degree from a university in the United States with the bachiller diploma.

3. Many colleges and universities in the United States give placement examinations to students who enter with some previous knowledge of a subject, and this is a more reliable means of determining the level at which the student can work than units of credit on a transcript. Students should pursue studies at the proper level and should not repeat work which they know, but credits that have already been used for admission cannot be counted again as advanced work in the college. The student's maturity at the time of his secondary school studies would not as a rule warrant the granting of advanced college credit for a subject studied one or two hours a week in the secondary school.

As the Committee emphasizes, the whole matter of equivalences is extremely difficult because of the wide difference in the theory and systems of education. Much more study is necessary before very firm agreements can be reached. Contrary to the situation in the Latin American republics, no single agency in the United States can represent all the schools, and that is another reason why arrangements with U.S. institutions have to be made slowly. Among the Latin American countries the problem is somewhat simpler, since the educational philosophy and system differ less from one country to another, but there is nevertheless considerable difficulty in making transfers. Even within the same country or the same university students frequently lose credit for some part of their previous study or have to begin anew if they change their field of specialization, for each type of school and each professional school has its prescribed program of study.

In connection with the materials given in the Appendices to the Document it should be noted that school people in the United States did not agree to the equivalences recommended in No. 3, the report of the committee appointed by the Rector of the National University of Mexico.