

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Annual Report
Submitted by the
Dominican Republic

Prepared February 2001

Background

At its October 1997 meeting, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) determined that the new approval standards adopted in October 1996 and used by the Consejo Nacional Educacion Superior (CONES) to evaluate medical schools in the Dominican Republic (Republic) were comparable to those used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States.

After adopting new standards, the Republic initiated a comprehensive review of all medical schools using the new standards. As of October 1997, however, it had not completed the review. Consequently, the NCFMEA requested that CONES submit annual reports of its activities with respect to its accreditation of the medical schools in the Republic. The NCFMEA reviewed and accepted the first of the reports at its March 1998 meeting and subsequently requested that CONES provide the next report on its activities by September 1, 1998. The second report showed CONES had completed a 14-month evaluation process of all medical schools in the Republic. The efforts resulted in the closing of two medical schools, the deferral for final determination of two medical schools and the determination that seven medical schools satisfied CONES' requirements and standards. In addition, CONES reported that it was initiating a quinquennial evaluation of every university's programs, administration, and recordkeeping to determine compliance with their stated mission, as well as the other factors contained in CONES standards for approval.

During its October 1998 meeting, the NCFMEA accepted the report submitted by CONES and requested that CONES submit another report by August 15, 1999 describing its continuing accreditation activities for review at the NCFMEA's Fall 1999 meeting. Because the report from CONES was not received in time to prepare an analysis for the Fall 1999 NCFMEA meeting, the NCFMEA voted to postpone its review of the report and requested that CONES submit, by January 14, 2000, a status report on its ongoing accreditation activities. The NCFMEA reviewed both the September 1999 report and the February 2000 status report during its March 2000 meeting. The NCFMEA determined from the annual report that the compliance issues raised by the CONES criteria were verified through subsequent site visits to the two schools that had

earlier received deferral determinations and that the two other institutions remained closed.

The February 2000 report discussed significant developments closely related to the CONES evaluation process that centered on the revitalization of the Dominican Association for Self-Study and Accreditation (ADDAAC), the accrediting body created in 1989 to promote "the establishment of minimum levels of quality higher education in the Republic through an evaluation and accrediting process." However, a lack of financial resources seriously limited the efforts of the ADDAAC to institute a comprehensive self-evaluation process with external evaluation of the institutions and it remained nearly inactive from 1993 to 1999. The CONES recognized and certified the ADDAAC as the "nationally recognized accreditation agency" of the Republic for institutions of higher education and/or its specific programs with its fundamental objective to serve as a guarantee that all higher education institutions fulfilled the requirements of the Republic's higher education system. Because CONES discussed the different steps it had taken to ensure that the revitalized ADDAAC would have a sound financial basis and the trained personnel to carry out its mission effectively, the NCFEMA requested that CONES discuss the activities of the ADDAAC and provide a copy of the standards the ADDAAC has established to accredit medical schools in the next annual report.

Summary of Findings

The annual report submitted by the Republic's Consejo Nacional Educacion Superior focuses on changes that may occur in the manner in which the Republic will authorize and evaluate medical schools. The agency has not addressed what accrediting activities, if any, it conducted in 2000 nor has it provided a copy of its accreditation standards as requested. Therefore, the Committee may want to request that the CONES provide the Committee with a copy of ADDAAC's accreditation standards, discuss its accreditation activities and those of the ADDAAC under the new law, and report on its progress with the quinquennial evaluation of outcomes implemented during the 2000-2001 academic year.

Staff Analysis

The annual report submitted by the Dominican Republic focuses on some expected changes in the laws affecting higher education as a result of the election of the new government in the latter part of 2000. Pursuant to public policy, the new government is evaluating the laws of the Republic to identify the changes that are necessary to update, improve and/or modernize the laws. One of the proposed changes establishes the Consejo Nacional Educacion Superior (CONES) as a Ministry to be known as the Secretary of State for Superior Education, Science and Technology (medical schools in particular). The new government has presented a project to enact a new law to replace Presidential Decree 517-96 regarding educational oversight and evaluation. However, until the new law is implemented, the authority for educational oversight and evaluation

granted under the Presidential Decree 517-96 will remain in effect with some minor changes. The CONES provides assurance that as soon as the law is approved and implemented it will provide the NCFMEA with a copy of the law in English.

The accrediting agency, the Dominican Association for Self-Study and Accreditation (ADDAAC) is also to be held, once again, in suspense until the new law is approved, at which time CONES will provide the necessary authorization for the ADDAAC to fulfill its mission.

Until such time as all of these changes occur, CONES reports that it will retain its role as the agency with sole responsibility for overseeing and accrediting medical schools in the Republic. In addition, it reports that it will continue to follow up on the quinquennial evaluation of outcomes to ensure that the required changes are completed and implemented to its satisfaction during the 2000-2001 academic year.