

MENTAL RETARDATION IN THAILAND

by -- FRANOM PRASERTSRISSAK

According to the report of the Mentally Retarded Foundation there are about 1% of the total population in Thailand which are mentally retarded. It means there are about 480,000 mentally retarded persons in Thailand. All of them are classified that 85% of them are educable (IQ. 50-70), 10% are trainable (IQ. 35-49), and 5% are severe grade (IQ. under 35). But we have only two schools for the mentally retarded which can provide education for only about .001% of the total mentally retarded. Many of them do not enrolled at school. So our special education organization need of extension and development.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

The government has recognized that disadvantaged children (including the mentally retarded) should be given equal educational opportunities and that the State should be responsible for the management of special education. It is stated in the National Education Scheme of 1977 that:

"The State shall endeavour to make education accessible to the poor, the physically, mentally and socially handicapped as well as the educationally disadvantaged" (Section 2, Article 15) and

"Special education is provided for those who have special character traits, or who are physically, intellectually or mentally abnormal. It may be given in special institutions, or in ordinary school as appropriate" (Section 3, Article 38).

The present administration has included this provision in its policy statement made to the Parliament:

"The government will promote full development of all children and youth in accordance with their conditions and individual differences. It will provide assistance and remediation for children with special problems, physically, mentally and emotionally....."

It is evident (from thus various statements) that the government of Thailand has definite goals to provide special education services for the disabled. These goals are specified into particular objectives which form the basis of special education organization as follow:

OBJECTIVES

- To provide equal educational opportunities for exceptional children, who have been exempted from the Compulsory Education Act, in accordance with their abilities, either in state-owned institutions or in cooperation with a private sector from the primary up to the secondary levels.

- To offer individual programmes tailored to the type of disabilities and the stages of impairment so that each exceptional child may develop his-her own potential at own speed and eventually fit into community life as a fully integrated member.

SCHOOLS AND WELFARES FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

There are only two schools in Bangkok for the mentally retarded children in Thailand, identified by an I.Q. lower than 50.

One is run by a hospital for the mentally retarded and the other by a foundation under the royal patronage of Her Majesty the Queen.

The Ministry of Education through its Special Education Division in Department of General Education, cooperates with all agencies concerned both government and private in organising the bulk of special education service for children with special need either in separate institutions or in ordinary school by mainstreaming such as the programme of teaching the slow-learner by set a special class in ordinary school. Now there is a school for the mentally retarded in Chiangmai, the northern part of Thailand, teaching the pre-school age mentally retarded children and elementary level but the service is still limited.

The Ministry of Public Health concentrates on detection and remediation and run a school for the mentally retarded as I have mentioned above.

The Ministry of Interior, through its Public Welfare Department takes care of the children and the youth who are intellectually or mentally handicapped in severe grade.

In addition the private sector providing assistance and funds through foundations and charitable organizations.

In my opinion, I think that the rest of the mentally retarded in Thailand who are abandoned should be given more chance to enroll at school for remedial teaching, training, and helping them learn how to help themselves in daily life so that they will not cause

the social problems and they can live with the other people happily. But like any other developing countries, Thailand's efforts in organizing education for children with special needs are plagued with constraints in terms of resources and personnel.

General speaking, poor services in special education for the mental retardation are concisely resulted from the lack of budget, qualified personnel which are all the major factors obstructing the development of education for the mentally retarded children.

PLAN FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Despite these constraints, Thailand has plans to expand special education organization in its Fifth National Education Development Plan to be implement from 1981 - 1986 over and above the longterm ten-year plan to be launched by the International year of the Disabled Persons (IYDP).

by ... MS. PRANOM PRASERTSRISAK

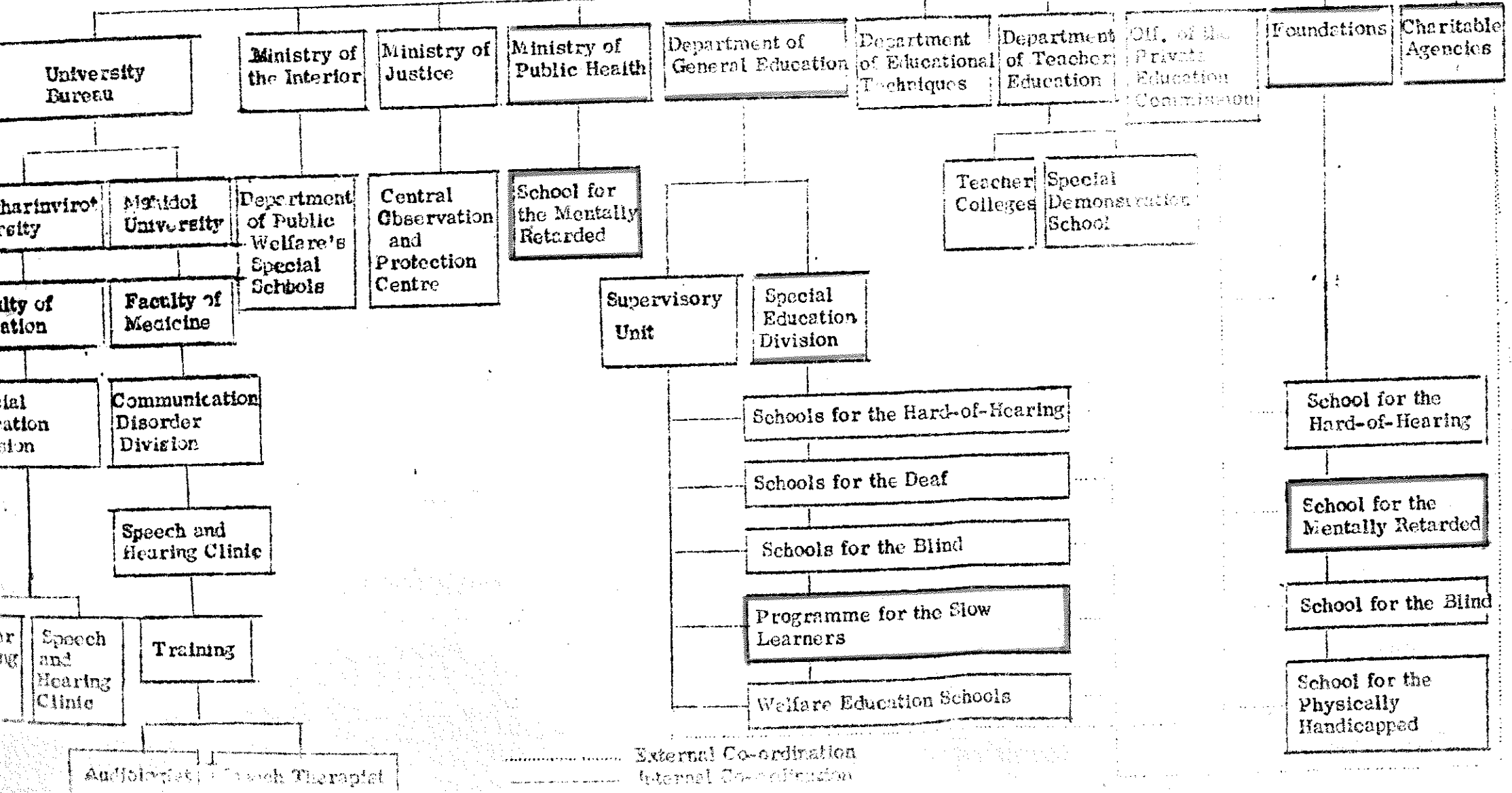
Chart 1

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Special Education Services

Governmental Agencies

Private Agencies



External Co-ordination
Internal Co-ordination