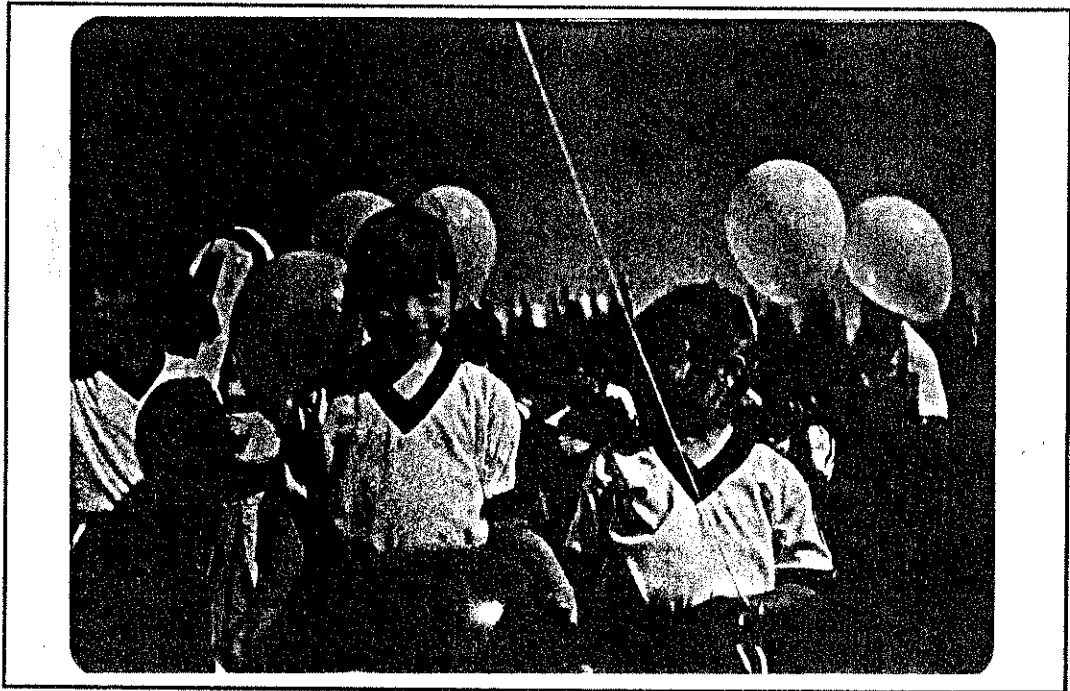


# COUNTRY REPORT

## COSTA RICA CENTRAL AMERICA

### THE GROUP TRAINING COURSE IN MENTAL RETARDATION



CENTRO NACIONAL DE EDUCACION ESPECIAL  
FERNANDO CENTENO GUELL

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

*Prof. Andrina Escalante Vargas*

1991 - 1992

# COUNTRY REPORT

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# COUNTRY REPORT

**FERNANDO CENTENO GUELL**

## **EDUCATION CENTER PROFILE**

Special Education starts in the year of 1939 in Costa Rica. In 1940 the Special Education school is created thanks to Professor Fernando Centeno Guell.

This center is a government institution depending of the Education Ministry.

It covers a population of 600 students divided in three departments which are:

- **Mental Retardation Department.**
- **Blind and Visual Impairment Department.**
- **Language and Hearing Impairment Department.**

The Centers goal is to offer an integral rehabilitation to the student, so that they can be incorporated into society as useful people.

### **Mental Retardation Department:**

Its main goal is to create programs to facilitated the personal, social and economical integration of mentally retarded people.

The curriculum is based on school, family and community integration and the development of independence and responsibility. The programs are emphasized depending on the students individual needs.

### **LEVELS:**

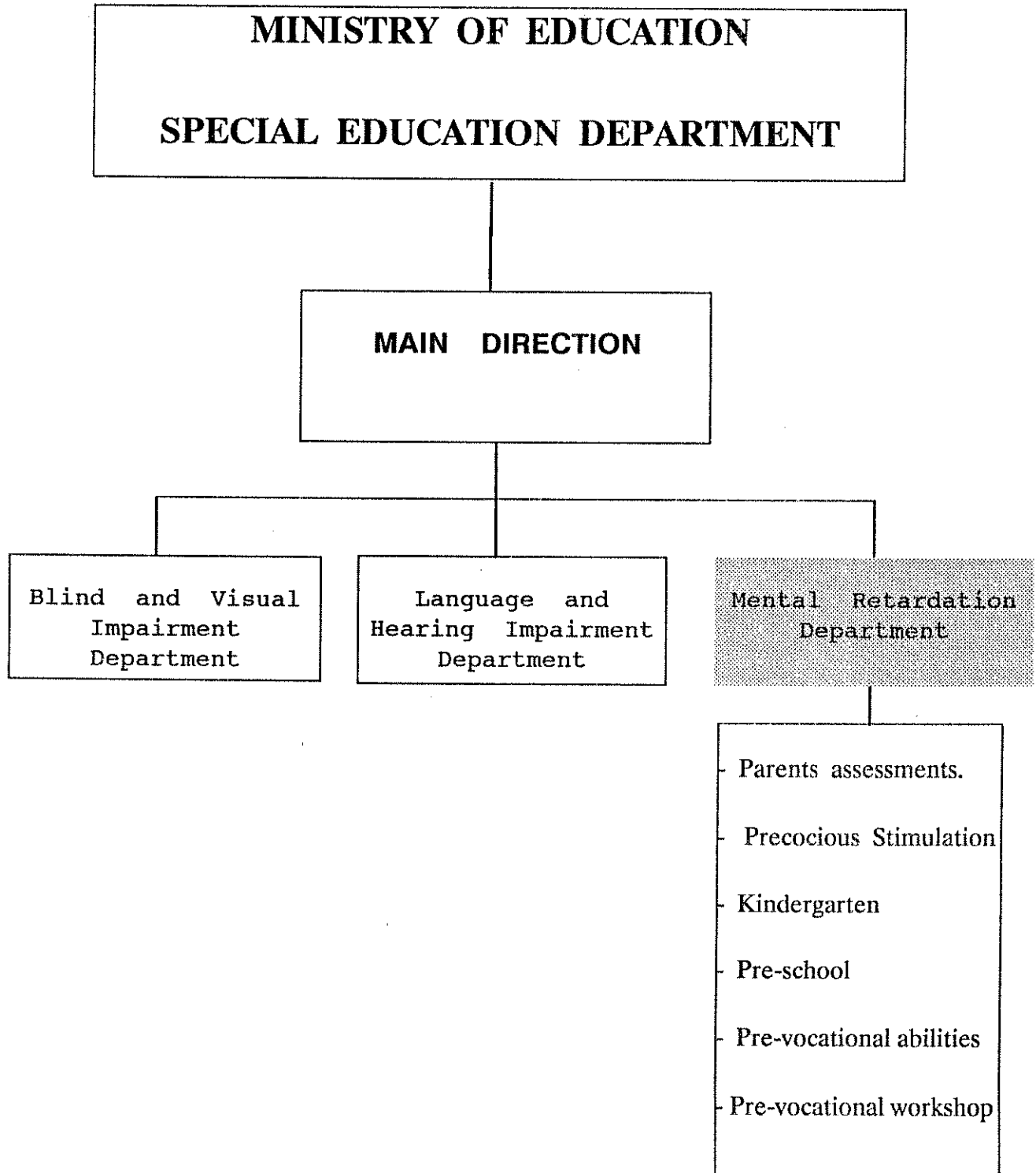
- Parents assessments.  
(0 months to 3 years).
- Precocious Stimulation.  
(3 to 6 years).
- Kindergarten.  
(6 to 9 years).
- Preschool.  
(8-9 to 10 years).
- Pre-vocational abilities.  
(10 to 14 years).
- Pre-vocational workshop.  
(14 to 18 years).



**NAME OF PARTICIPANT:**  
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**COUNTRY REPORT**  
CENTRO NACIONAL DE EDUCACION ESPECIAL  
FERNANDO CENTENO GUEL

ORGANIZATION CHART



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# COUNTRY REPORT

## SOCIAL, MEDICAL & EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

### I. WELFARE/SOCIAL SITUATION

There are government institutions as well as many other private organizations and persons that work in an area of social projection and welfare for the mentally retarded, seeing this as a right for the mentally retarded person as well as for anybody else.

The most known government offices are the Consejo Nacional de Rehabilitacion y Educacion Especial (CNREE), the Ministerio de Educacion and the Ministerio de Salud. These institutions give support to projects and programs that have been born from private organizations, and develop their established responsibilities in the social area such as: University Education, Preventive Education, Social Guidance and in the educational field which will be explained later on.

In Costa Rica there are two well known centers for children and adults who are homeless: Centro Nacional de Rehabilitación de Santa Ana that has small school for children who leave there; and Hogar Luz that takes care of severe Mentally Retarded persons care are homeless.

### II. MEDICAL SERVICES

The Centro Nacional de Rehabilitacion works with a multidisciplinary team to move the handicapped population into the best possible integration.

The Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social (Social Security Government Office) is in charge of providing programs in the field of illness prevention, treatment, medical and dental assistance for the M.R. persons in the Costarrican hospitals.

The Ministry of Education works together with the Ministry of Health to provide dentist and speech therapy attention to Special Education Schools.

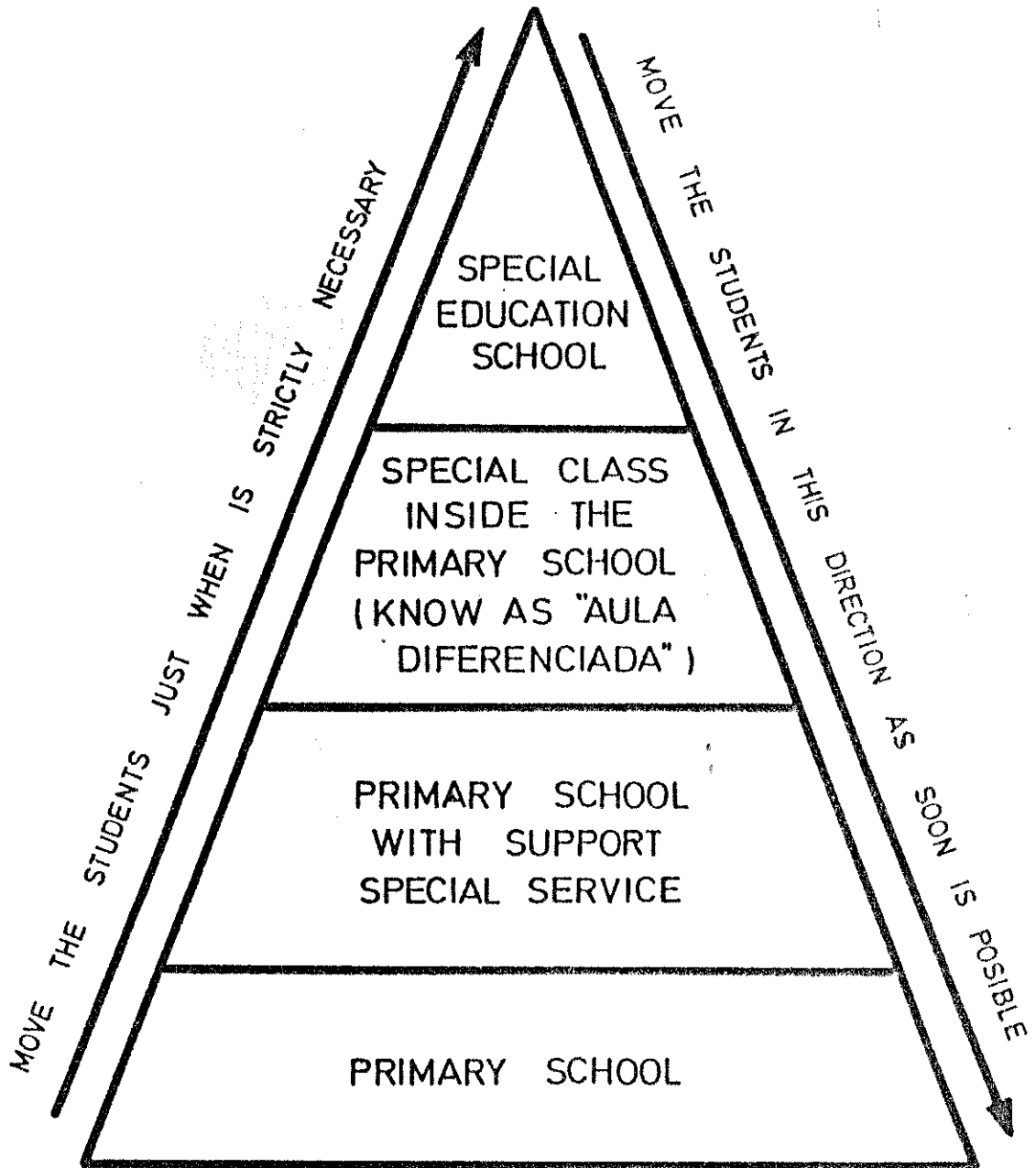
### III EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The Ministry of Education offers an educational program divided into four big steps:

- 1- Early Intervention. (0 to 5 years).  
Development of motor skills, language, social and personal behavior, perception areas.
- 2- Kinder and Pre-school: (5 to 10 years).  
Reinforces the same areas and starts the academic concepts and knowledge. If during this period the student shows the adequate skills (academic, behavioral, and social ones) to be integrated to a primary school or special class he or she shall be moved.
- 3- Practical abilities: (11 to 14 years).  
Stimulates academic areas and basic daily living chores and social behavior.
- 4- Pre-vocational workshops: (15 to 18 years).  
Experiences in working habits, development of students' skills, functional reading and writing, independence to move in the community.  
To understand the basical educational system in our country I present the explanation figure in the following page, where you can see how children are moved out or in of the Special Education Services depending on their development.

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ADAPTATION OF THE DENO'S CASCADE

# COUNTRY REPORT

## IV. FINANCIAL AIDS

The Central Government gives the budget (according to the National Government Budget) to develop the Special Education Programs and buildings as well as all things needed to attend completely all handicapped people necessities in schools, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, etc.

## V. VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

There is a growing list of associations and foundations that work to provide assistance in many different areas related to Mentally Retarded people. Among them:

### REGION:

### SAN JOSE

| <u>General Type of Service</u>                           | <u>Name of the Institution</u>                            | <u>Population attended and type</u>   |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1- Workshops with job sub-contracts in private companies | Asociación de Industrias de Buena Voluntad de C.R. (AIBV) | 60 persons with M.R (16 - 54 years).  |
| 1- Sheltered workshop handcraft                          | ASPAPEX   | All South of San Jose                 |
| 2- Psychologic attended                                  |   | persons with M.R.                     |
| 3- Language therapy                                      |   | from 12 to 15 years.                  |
| 4- Medical & Dental Attention                            |   |                                       |
| 5- Special Education                                     |   |                                       |
| 6- Technical Assistance.                                 |   |                                       |
| 1- Sheltered workshop                                    | ACOPANE   | 60 peoples with M.R. (1 to 45 years). |
| 2- Sports and Recreation                                 |   |                                       |
| 3- Technical Assistance                                  |   |                                       |
| 1- Parents Guidance                                      | ACOPSIDO  |                                       |
| 1- Sheltered home  | Aldeas S.O.S.   | 30 children with severe               |
| 2- Physical and Psychological                            | Hogar Luz Therapy   | Mental Retardation                    |

### REGION:

### ALAJUELA

|   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1- Vocational Training in the fields of Arts crafts   | Fundación Acción YA        | 60 handicapped people of Grecia Region |
| 1- Providing equipment and materials to develop all capacities and to promote the work integration. | Comité de Ayuda al Lisiado | 55 M.R. people                         |

### REGION:

### CARTAGO

|   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 1- Pre-vocational education in many fields including handcrafts, agro-animal care | Instituto Técnico Agropecuario de Oreamuno        | 53 students (14 - 20 years)  |
| 2- Job obtainment.  |   |                              |
| 1- Pre-vocational education in Agro field, handcraft and general services.        | Unidad de Rehabilitación Profesional de Turrialba | 79 students (14 - 45 years). |

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# COUNTRY REPORT

## VI. PRINCIPLE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN COSTA RICA

In 1957, a Special Education Law was legislated:

*"... Special Education is that which is provided for children and young people whose intellectual, physical, emotional and social characteristics are different from normal and that looks forward to develop their capacities and their integration to society as useful people".*

(Ley Fundamental de Educación).

Special Education is very recent in Costa Rica. It was not until 1968 that it began to be organized as a profession. Several institutions started to appear since 1939 that empirically tried to offer some education to the handicapped population.

In 1974, the programs of normalization and integration started to develop. The concept of "normalization" refers to the fact of given the handicapped people the normal patterns and life conditions that everybody has. For this reason all efforts are made to conduce the Special Ed. population towards the closest educational normalization. The number of Special Classes in Elementary Schools are approximately 124, and the number of population in the existing institutions is becoming smaller

Special classrooms and regions covered according to the demand are:

|             |    |
|-------------|----|
| San Jose:   | 57 |
| Alajuela:   | 19 |
| Heredia:    | 17 |
| Cartago:    | 13 |
| Puntarenas: | 11 |
| Limón:      | 7  |

Special Education in Costa Rica is growing fast, as well the idea of normalization. People are accepting the handicapped person as any other member of the family and offering him the rights he has for educational and social integration. However, the Costarrican family is too over-protective and it hasn't developed the best attitude towards independence.

There are several problems that could be noted concerning special education in our country. Among them, the early diagnosis of the handicapped and the parents guidance is not good enough. For this reason there are many parents that loose time and efforts before arriving to the correct service or center that would provide the special education needed for their child.

The coordinated work between institutions is deficient. They work independently and a lot of information and valuable professional guidance is lost or mis-used.

There is a big population of young handicapped people that needs to be located into the rehabilitation system. We need more workshops, and more job possibilities for them, so that the principal philosophy of integration and normalization can be achieved in a higher degree.

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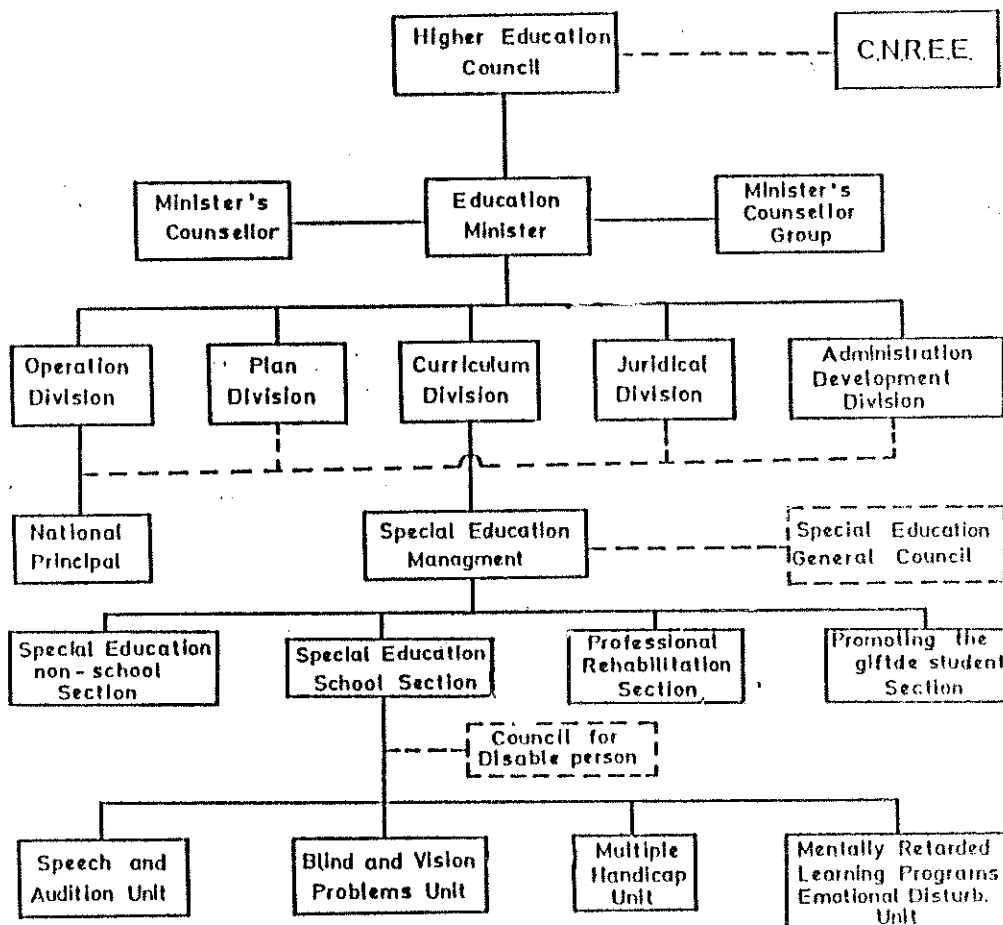


# COUNTRY REPORT

## LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Ministry of Education offers the actual legal organization chart shown on this page.

It has been changed through the years to improve its administrative efficiency and coverage.



SPECIAL EDUCATION CHART  
PUBLIC EDUCATION MINISTRY  
COSTA RICA

One of the CENARE interest is the publication of legal regulations that benefit to the persons with funtional limitations in order to provide the information needed for the handicapped person to be aware of his rights as any other individual of society.

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# COUNTRY REPORT

## APPLICANT'S EXPERIENCE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAINING

Since 1986, I have been working in the field of special education, finding it to be very interesting. My first years of experience I worked as a kindergarten teacher for mentally retarded children in an institution. Later on, I worked in a pre-vocational workshop, also as a teacher of mentally retarded teen-agers.

In 1987, I supervised work in a sheltered workshop for mentally retarded adults. It was a silk-screen studio. After this I had a very different and enriching experience, which was to work in an institution for children who suffered cerebral palsy. I worked teaching a low group, who had a degenerative disease called "Batten's" disease.

During 1991, I started working again with mental and retarded teen-agers in an institution. All these years I have felt the need of learning more methods and taking new ideas to improve my actual work. I have been specially interested in arts in all its expressions. I know that art is communication and handicapped people need it so much.

For this reason I have started a small Foundation that tries to offer new art possibilities to handicapped people, specially those with mental retardation. We actually have a folk dancing group and a very primitive graphics studio. Our work is completely volunteer and we face a lot of economic and administrative problems. I am searching to learn all I can, to be able to work better on this project that has been named "**Huellas en el Arte**".



**"I don't want anybody to have pity on me, I am here to live, create and be happy".**  
"Huellas en el Arte".

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