

TRAINING COURSE IN
MENTAL RETARDATION

JFY 1998

COUNTRY REPORT

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COSTA RICA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. Name	1
2. Country	1
3. Name of the Organization	1
4. Outline of the Function of the Organization	1
5. Organization Chart	2
6. The Current Situation and Trends in Rehabilitation Services	
a) Status of Educational	3
b) Welfare / Social and Medical Systems and Services	4
c) Financial Aid	6
d) Voluntary Activities	6
7. Philosophy on Rehabilitation Services for People with MR And Problems to Solve when Making the Philosophy Actual	6
8. Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs Provided for People With MR in Your Country	7
9. Service Delivery System and Relevant Law and Regulations	8

MENTAL RETARDATION (JFY 1998)

COUNTRY REPORT

1. Name : Elizabeth Carranza Pastor
2. Country : Costa Rica
3. Name of your Organization : Instituto Andrea Jimenez
4. Outline of the Function of Your Organization

The Instituto Andrea Jimenez, founded in 1974 as a semiprivate organization, is a specialized school responsible for the education and training for special population mentally retarded, physical and mentally handicapped people ranged from 0 to 21 years old.

It covers a population of students. The curriculum is based on school and family integration and the development of independence and self-sufficiency. The programs are emphasized depending on the students individual needs. It offers auxiliary services such as: Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy and Psychology Therapy to attend individually or as group students and their families. Arts and cooking lessons are part of the regular curriculum.

The population attended is classified by group of age as follows:

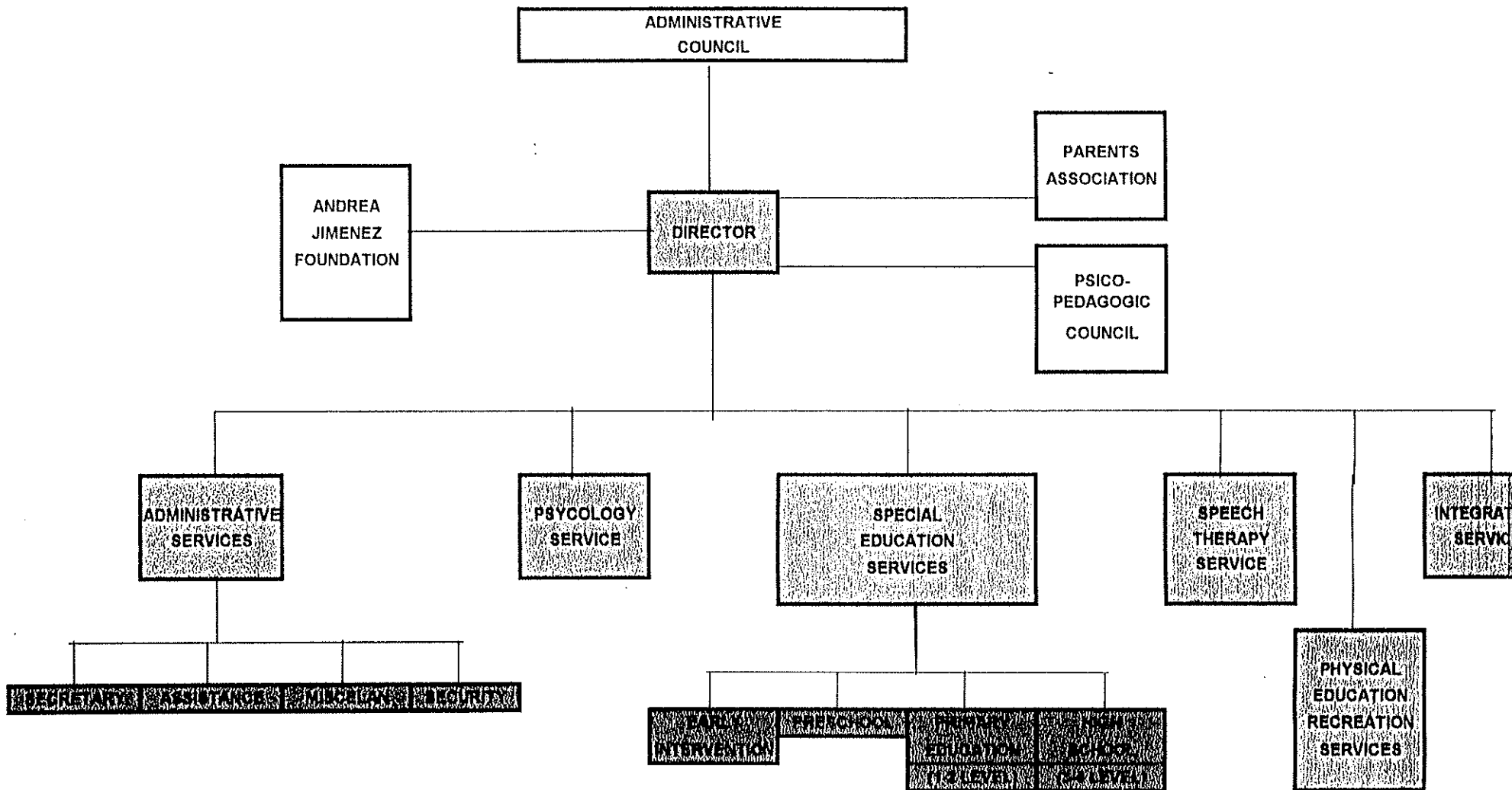
Level	Group of Age (years old)
Early intervention	0 months to 3 years and 3 to 6
Pre-school	5 to 7
First Level	8 to 10
Second Level	11 to 14
Third Level	15 to 18
Fourth Level	18 to 21

5. Organization Chart

The organization Chart is given in table # 1.

I have been working in the IV level Pre-Labor attending young adults from 18 to 21 years old, with severe mental retardation. The curriculum program is based in a

TABLE # 1
 INSTITUTO ANDREA JIMENEZ
 ORGANIZATION CHART



daily training where the goal is that each student acquire the most self-sufficient in their daily basic needs. They are trained in real situations on how to travel in public transportation through the city, adequate behave in public sites, etc. The students are reinforce in basic academic skills. Each student are encourage to follow specific labor norms and rules require for a further possible insertion in the market labor.

6. The Current Situation and Trends in Rehabilitation Services

a) Status of educational

First of all, in Costa Rica the elementary and special education in public institutions are free of fees. There is a principle in our constitution law that each person without any social, race or religious discrimination must have the right to receive education

In 1939 was established the first Costa Rican Special Education School in the city of San Jose, named Fernando Centeno Guell. The main goal of this institution was to supply special education and training to mentally retarded people. The Ministry of Education (MEP), which is the lead of the educational organization in Costa Rica, opened in 1968 the Special Education Department to regulate the politics in special education nationwide. Up to this date there was no educational institution at superior levels which prepared skilled people who can teach and train special people. Thus in 1974 The University of Costa Rica started to mayor teachers in Special Education with emphasis in Mental Retardation, Learning Disabilities and Communication Disorders. In the same year a Special Class Program was settled down where physically and mentally pupils could have a better social integration. At a technical level other vocational training institutions for teenagers with disabilities appeared.

The MEP offers service to mentally retarded persons since they are babies, in programs of early integration. As they grow up these persons can attend a special class in Elementary School or a Special Education School, where children could learn basic reading, writing and mathematics. When they are 14 or 15 years old, begin to receive a prevocational training and they can learn the basic steps to work in the community.

In an attempt to integrate children with disabilities to normal schools, in the late eighties MEP allow to be integrated to public and elementary schools pre-scholars and scholars with disabilities in conjunction with normal students.

However, the severe mentally retarded children should continue attending the special school for teaching and training by skilled teachers (See Figure # 1).

In regard to the organization of students in special schools are classified by group of ages in the following manner:

Level	Group of Age (years old)
Early intervention	0 months to 5 years
Kinder	5 to 9
Elemental	9 to 14
Pre-Vocational Workshops	14 to 18

b) Welfare/social and Medical Systems and Services

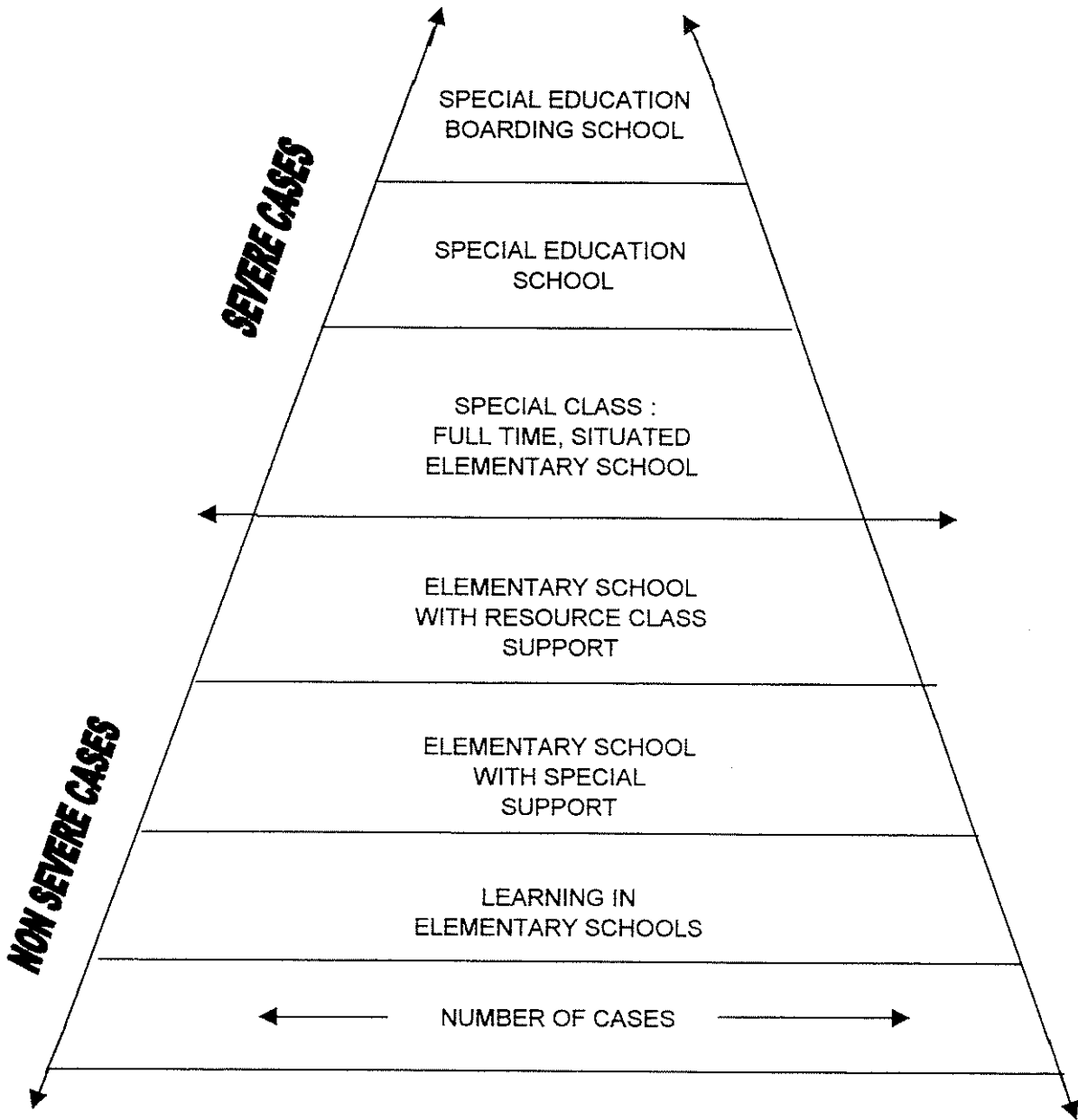
In our country exists some welfare/social programs which are supplied by national institutions, which contributes to the well being of many special families.

Under the social guarantees dictated by the former President Calderon, more than 50 years ago the *Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (CCSS)* was established to let the costarricans have medical assistance subvention provided by different physicians. The people to be eligible for this free assistance must be register at the health regime system. In addition, CCSS has others welfare programs such as: Retirement Pension, Invalidity and Death to be enjoy by the elderly people. In the case of Severe Mental Retarded people, the CCSS gives to the ones who qualified a lower allowance for life annuity as a matter of aid. Families with disabled members and willing to send them to a private institution must carry on with the full amount of costs.

Although the CCSS and Ministry of Health intent to cover all medical necessities to all the population, their budget shortage will not allow them to accomplish in a widely scale. Most of the families with special children should cover all private medical expenses, which in general are very high as are those from the attendance to dentist, neurologist and cardiologist. Those public institutions, governed by the MEP, offered in a limited scale Physical Therapist, Psychology and Speech Therapist Services. Therefore, a family requiring more of these services must hire them in private clinics or hospitals expending a large amount of money.

Another institution which intent to integrate handicapped persons is The Rehabilitation National Center composed by a multidisciplinary team. It advise all institutions regarding to disabled population.

FIGURE # 1



SPECIAL EDUCATION ORGANIZATION BY LEVELS
(ADAPTATION)

In addition, two well known centers for children and adults who are homeless named Centro Nacional de Rehabilitación de Santa Ana and Hogar Luz takes care of Severe Mentally Retarded persons.

c) Financial Aid

The Special Education depends on the government budget, to open new services, to pay the salaries of the people involved and to provide schools with all the equipment and facilities required.

There are companies which finance specific projects in some of the special schools. An example is the Andrea Jimenez Foundation that collects contributions from wealthy people to sponsor scholarships at the Instituto Andrea Jimenez.

Also, Costa Rica has signed several agreements with other Governments as Japan, United States and Spain, getting social, educational and medical benefits from special equipment, training and grants.

d) Voluntary Activities

There are several foundations, associations and organizations that work with parents, families and communities of the mentally retarded people to improve the quality of life of this population.

Some of these groups are: Associations of Parents, Friends and Persons with Down Syndrome, Associations of Children with Cerebral Palsy, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Voluntary Ladies of the National Children Hospital, all of them having played an import role in getting financial and moral support for special families.

It is relevant to mention the social labor that Universities and High School Students do in special schools getting awareness of the needs of the handicapped people.

7. Philosophy on rehabilitation Services for People with MR and Problems to Solve when Making the Philosophy Actual

In my opinion, during the last years, the educative programs in Costa Rica has turned to a more real vision of the needs and abilities of the handicapped people. There is a new whole educational paradigm in Special Education Politics, were the main principles are integration and normalization of persons with disabilities.

Any person should be prepared and educated, thus he will become as independent as it could be possible. Besides our good efforts of reaching this goal, our reality is clear: There are several problems concerning Especial Education in Costa Rica. Elementary teachers didn't have adequate training to attend these special children in their overcrowded regular classes.

By the other hand, costarrican families are over protective and they have not develop their best attitude towards independence of their special children, so it is necessary to work with the parents giving them guidance.

I'm sure that this new idea of education is started to give special people new possibilities of life and at the same time, helping costarrican regular students to understand and care about people with disabilities. Even though the academic field is very important, teachers must work bearing in mind, a wide vision and sense of life which allows a real integration of the disable person to the world. There is a big population of young and adult handicapped people that needs to be located into the rehabilitation system, overall for severe mental retarded people. We needed more workshops and job possibilities for them not only in the city but also in rural areas, so the principal philosophy of integration and normalization can be done at higher levels.

8. Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs Provided for People with MR in Your Country

In Costa Rica the program named SILOR is oriented for those communities where exist a high incidence of persons with disabilities. It intents to provide the population with vocational training regarding to the kind of industry prevailing in a rural town. This program was born by the effort applied as a whole by the National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education (C.N.R.E.E.) and MEP. Special Teachers, other kind of professionals from the local community and the families are responsible for the conduction of this program.

However, it does exist the problem that many of the adult population with severe MR has actually no place of work, due the lack of capacity of the workshops to shelter everyone who needs.

A new community program is going to be open next year in Alajuela, near to the capital of San Jose, named Taller Servio. The objective is to give vocational training and further jobs to persons with MR.

9. Service Delivery System and Relevant Law and Regulations

The MEP offers the most known and basic programs in MR services. In 1987 former president Oscar Arias and the Education Minister create a new decree about the Special Education Department organization. Figure # 2 shows how a student depending on his or her condition would be move in an educational scale.

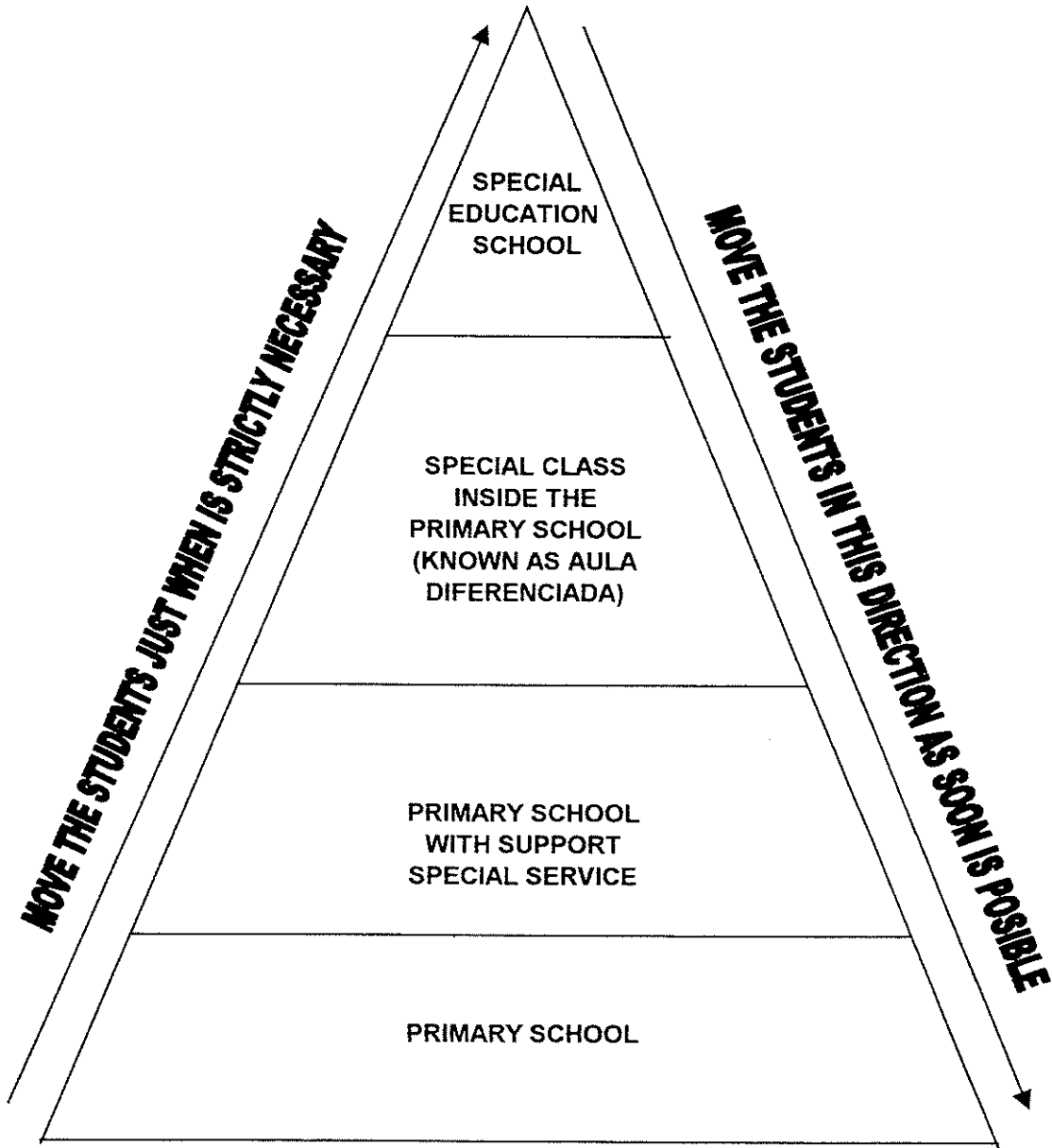
The National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education (C.N.R.E.E.) plays an import role in the social adaptation of persons with MR. This Council works very close to the Public Education Ministry's politics and both leads the orientation and methodology for handicapped programs. Another function of this Council is to supply most of the information of the subject.

In Figure # 3 it is shown the MEP Special Education organization chart.

Furthermore, Costa Rica has signed various international declarations and agreements. Some of them are:

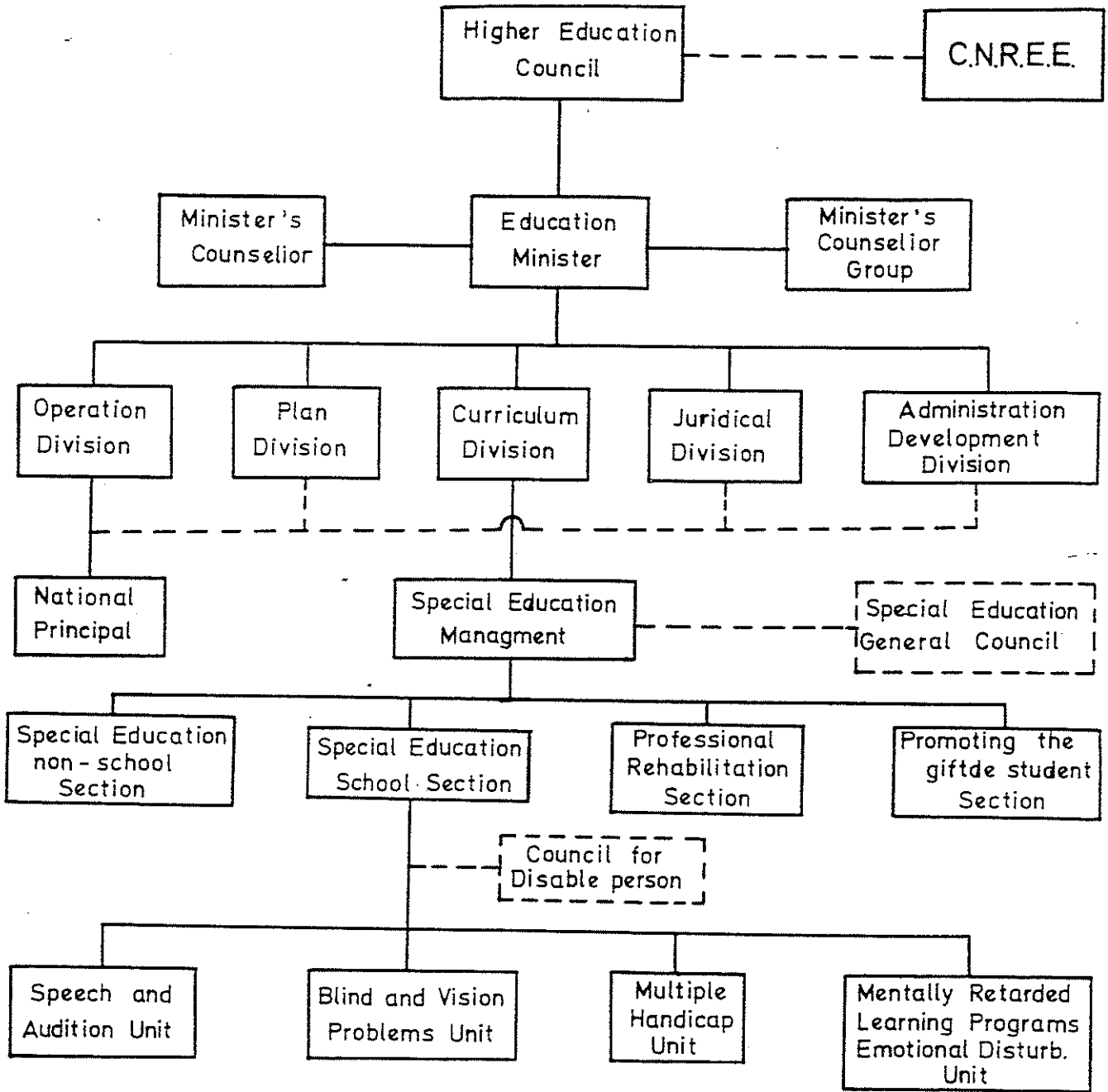
- 1948 Universal Declaration of Human rights (United Nations)
- 1949 Republic of Costa Rica Politic Constitution that declares the equality of everyone without any kind of discrimination because of race, religion and any other situation.
- 1975 Declarations of Rights for Disable People (United Nations)
- 1982 Worldwide Action Program for Disabled
- 1988 Tax Incentive Law for Employers which Hired Discapacity People, was approved by the Congress
- 1989 National Politics on Prevention of Deficiency, Disability and Integral Rehabilitation (Costa Rica)
- 1994 Wold Declaration of Education for All (Thailand)
- 1994 Declarations of Salamanca (World Conference for people with special needs, Spain)
- 1995 The Law Equality of opportunities for people with disabilities in Costa Rica, was approved by the Congress

FIGURE # 2



ADAPTATION OF THE DENO'S CASCADE

FIGURE N° 3



SPECIAL EDUCATION CHART
PUBLIC EDUCATION MINISTRY
COSTA RICA