

## Contemporary context and structure of education in Costa Rica

### **1. To what extent is formal education standardized and centralized?**

The system is largely centralized in one institution which is called the Ministry of Public Education that oversees compulsory primary and secondary education; however, as of the mid-1990's there have been efforts to decentralize to increase the level of coverage to rural areas, or areas too far from the central valley. This is done through a program called the "regionalization" of education. The ministry of Public Education has established some regional offices that are in charge of overseeing, providing, and making sure that primary and secondary education reaches the largest number of the population. Regional offices need to report back to the central office, but first they make an assessment of the age range of the population, and then they try to reach out to the families with children who live there and try to welcome them into the educational system.

"I know they have made significant progress because my mother is an educator and she was part of that initiative back in the 1990s and now she's on the board of the National Education Association" said Morera. "And there's a major event where all of the delegates come to the central office for training in order to do their best for their offices."

Those efforts in regionalizing education have been linked to other efforts, for example, "tele-secondario", meaning "long-distance high school", which is a program aimed at reaching out to populations of young people who haven't had access to secondary education with the use of technology, sometimes on-site, but often with the help of teachers who are not physically located on-site, who try to supplement the education to at least reach the minimum standards.

Another initiative is the Open Education Initiative, which is for young adults who haven't been able to complete their secondary education. They are trying to make the system more flexible so they can open up new centers with flexible schedules based on the student's availability – sometimes they need to work – such as the young people who are working during normal school hours.

Furthermore, the Open Classroom Program is also aimed at adapting education in the first and second cycles (up to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade). They try to legitimize the right to education by adapting their schedules and offering assistance, for example, night high schools (colegios nocturnals).