Parent Education for Portugal

Robert Strom, Luisa Barros, Susan Daniels, Stanley Wurster, Shirley Strom

The desire of parents for self-improvement can often be met by adult education classes that focus on childrearing and family relationships. This kind of opportunity seems imminent in Portugal where stability is emerging after years of political and economic unrest. To help identify the attitudes and skills that deserve attention in formulating a relevant curriculum, the Parent as a Teacher Inventory was administered to 168 urban, middle class mothers and fathers of 3 to 9 year old children. The resulting profile is recommended for planning a pilot program that will reinforce family strengths, convey new knowledge on child development, and demonstrate methods for parents to become more successful.

Le désir des parents pour se perfectionner peut souvent être atteint par des cours d'éducation pour les adultes centrés sur des relations familiales et sur l'éducation des enfants. Ce type d'opportunités semble imminent au Portugal où la stabilité émerge après des années de déséquilibre politique et économique. Afin d'identifier les attitudes et les habilités qui méritent l'attention lorsqu'un programme pertinent est formulé, l'Inventaire des Parents en tant qu'Éducateurs a été administré à 168 mères et pères d'enfants de 3 à 9 ans provenant des familles urbaines de classe moyenne. Le profil résultant est recommandé pour planifier un programme pilote susceptible de renforcer les forces de la famille, d'orienter les nouvelles connaissances sur le développement de l'enfant, et de démontrer des méthodes pour améliorer le succès des parents.

El deseo de los padres por perfeccionarse puede a menudo ser cumplido por inter-

---

Robert Strom is the Director of the Office of Parent Development International, Division of Psychology in Education, Arizona State University. Susan Daniels, Stanley Wurster and Shirley Strom are Research Associates in the Office of Parent Development International. Luisa Barros is a Research Associate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Lisbon, Portugal. This study was supported by a Grant from the Moore Foundation.

The person to contact regarding this article is Professor Robert Strom at the Division of Psychology in Education, College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0611.
The experience known as "overchoice" is becoming common in America. People are faced with a growing number of television channels, breakfast cereals, movies, automobiles, and other consumer goods. There is also an increase in the sources that parents can consult for guidance about raising children. Besides relatives, the range of advisors includes authors who recommend principles of child development, marriage counselors who give advice on talk shows, and educators who offer classes in family relationships. Because so many professionals claim to have childbearing expertise, mothers and fathers wonder whose promises they can rely on and where they should turn for help. At times parents may even feel that informational options are a burden. On balance however, most of them are grateful to have alternatives (Cataldo, 1987).

Imagine an opposite circumstance, one in which mothers and fathers find it difficult to access any form of parent education. This is the situation in Portugal, a nation of ten million people who live in an area the size of Indiana. After forty years of dictatorship, a democratic minority government emerged in 1974. The shift to representative rule was followed by more than a decade of economic and political upheaval. During the past several years the social democratic party has enjoyed majority status and began to restore order to all sectors of society. The cooperative effort necessary to achieve national stability has placed great demands on Portugal's educational resources, so much so that other worthwhile pursuits such as producing books, magazines and broadcasts to support family development have been set aside. A further disappointment for parents is that public school teachers receive no formal training in how to include them in the educational partnership (Barros, 1988).

When contrasted with the American scene, the quality of support for families in Portugal is disappointing. Fortunately, there is a longstanding tradition of valuing the young, honoring the family, and considering parents as a child's first and most important teachers. It is generally felt that the government's lack of attention to family issues is undesirable but tolerable because the diversion of resources has been tied to overcoming a national crisis. There is a widespread hope, that as economic conditions stabilize, normal domestic priorities will once again take precedence including...