

FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTRES

FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES

1. ORIGIN AND OBJECTIVES

These Centres started in Spain in the sixties and later spread fairly rapidly to other Western European countries (Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, UK and Austria). Later on they were opened in USA, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, Nigeria, Kenya and the Philippines). Courses have been started recently in Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The main objectives are:

- To help parents assume their responsibility as educators of their children.
- To spread basic knowledge on marriage, family and education.
- To promote associations which favour the family.

The first two objectives require the continuous training of teachers and moderators, not only as regards basic and fundamental questions, but also in communication skills and the methodology for transmitting them. In order to connect with present interests, the post-modern sociological reality has to be taken into account (i.e. today's attitude towards culture, religion and love). The idea is to offer a true basis for the consideration of the anthropological reality of people, marriage, family, education, society and culture and consider them the way they always should have been.

The third objective allows, on the one hand, maintaining the parents' bonds with the Family Enrichment Centres so that they can be offered continuing attention and, on the other, to be present in environments where decisions on family, marriage and education are debated.

2. ACTIVITIES

Activities are centred on the courses or programmes related to family education. Methodology is based on participation through the case-method which facilitates a friendly relationship among attending parents and this friendship is fostered and strengthened. Potential for the parallel integration of parents and children is enhanced when the courses are run in students' clubs and the same applies to schools.

3. PROGRAMMES FOR PERMANENT FAMILY EDUCATION

3.1 CONTENTS

- **Scientific Areas:**
 - Differential psychology between man and woman
 - Knowing children, their characters and psychological traits (infancy, early childhood, late childhood, and adolescence)
 - Sensitive periods and guiding instincts

- Sociological reality (feminism, broken marriages, unions de facto, family disintegration and its consequences, secularisation and ideological and mass media manipulation)
- **Educational techniques:** motivation (types and levels, action plans), family meetings, decision taking process, etc.
- **Means:** family culture, participation, authority-obedience, children's careers, family communication, leisure time activities and pocket money policy.
- **Objectives:** freedom, education for love (intelligence, will, affectivity and sexuality), faith education, conscience forming, values and education of the will.
- **Principles:** human person, marriage, family, society, education, happiness-sorrow and culture.

3.2 STRUCTURE

The *standard course* has always consisted of an introductory session ("zero session") and nine plenary sessions.

On the basis of the contents the different programmes are articulated according to the circumstances of the respective centres (size, geographical area, degree of specialisation of the teachers, etc.)

In some centres programmes are structured in three-month modules (three modules per year); in others this is done according to the age ranges of the participants' children. In any case, the plan has to provide a service of permanent help in the form of life-long "family schools".

The minimum duration of any of these modules is considered to be between 20 to 25 hours for them to be efficient (for instance, 10 sessions of two and a half hours). This length should be sufficient to establish solid friendship amongst the participants.

3.3 QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMMES

This is based on the degree of proficiency and personal dedication of the teachers/moderators delivering the courses, and most specifically, of the team leaders.

4. TRAINING OF TEACHERS AND MODERATORS

Teachers in charge of leading the sessions acquire the necessary training according to a plan specifically designed for each individual. This plan should cover the matters listed in the programme as well as the forms of expression and the methodology. For this reason it is considered convenient that this training should follow the following areas:

- **Theory;** doctrinal, scientific and technical contents, and communication skills.
- **Participative methodology;** in particular the case study method
- **Personal experience;** this can be achieved through joining a group of teachers in a centre and leading or moderating sessions.

The first area is done at university level (e.g. *Institute of Family Sciences* at the University of Navarra). The second area can be found in places of regional scope like the school run by the *Instituto de Iniciativas de Orientacion Familiar* (e.g. *Aula Familiar*, Madrid). The third area is developed in the respective Family Enrichment Centres.

Training of moderators for the working groups goes along the second and third guideline but with less intensity and duration.

5. PROMOTING ASSOCIATIONS

This third objective requires a minimum of material and human resources to participate in an Association's activities (mass media, publications, etc.) and to be present in forums about marriage and family in the national and international arenas.

Material resources come from:

- Fees from the participants in the programmes
- Members contributions
- Subsidies and donations

International institutional participation started in 1993 with the Malta World NGO Forum, followed in 1994 with the International Year of the Family, Cairo World Conference on Population and Development and preparatory and follow-up seminars. Initiatives were offered at the last IFFD International Congresses to increase this global presence with more efficacy and representativity.

6. ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

To carry out these objectives, Family Enrichment Centres are financially structured mostly on the basis of voluntary help. This is the result of many years' experience.

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